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A detailed, light-colored illustration of a thistle, showing its spiky leaves and a large, feathery seed head. The thistle is positioned on the left side of the cover, with its stem and leaves extending upwards and outwards, partially overlapping the title text.

THE BANNER OF BLUE

By

S. R. Crockett

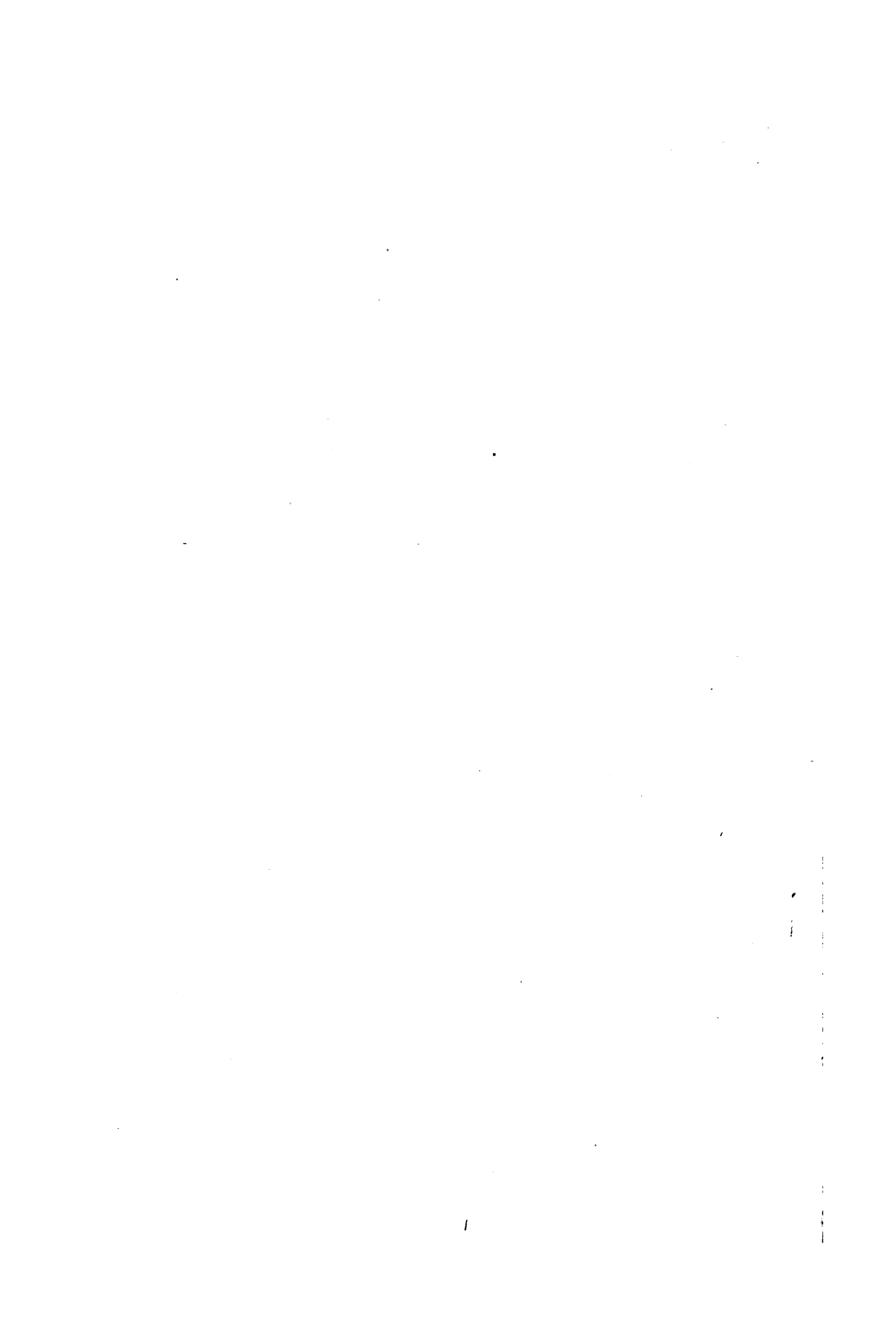
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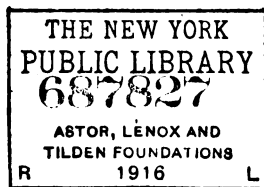
The
BANNER of BLUE

By
S. R. CROCKETT

Author of
The Stickit Minister, The Black
Douglas, The Firebrand, &c.



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THE BANNER OF BLUE

I

THE COAT OF MANY COLOURS

GRIM, grey, dour, fell the early December twilight upon the seaboard parish of Gower—the outward and visible sign, a stranger might well suppose, of a similar grim humour among its inhabitants. But up on the side of Bennangour Anton MacMillan, the herd, drew his checked plaid more closely about him and hummed a cheerful psalm. The sheep were “a’ weel.” There was yet no sign of the shepherd’s chief winter terror, an onfall of snow.

So the 124th psalm in the Scottish version was Anton’s vesper. For he agreed with the wise man who said: “Whoso is merry of heart, let him sing psalms.”

*“Now Israel
may say, and that truly,
If that the Lord
had not our cause maintained;
If that the Lord
had not our right sustained——”*

At this point Anton stopped abruptly, and shading his eyes as if the summer sun had been shining in them, made an impromptu night-glass of his palms and exclaimed, “Davert!”

Now when a west-country herd, born in the purple of the Kirk of the Covenants, valiant in defence of Headship and joyously confident of Total Depravity and the Eternity of Punishment, stops on his hillside

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and says "Davert," it may be taken for granted that he sees more than a ewe fallen "aval" in a hollow, or a slap in the dyke through which his flock had streamed away to the Promised Land of another man's pastures.

So Anton MacMillan, rugged champion of the Way, stood a long minute fixed, his faithful dogs sniffing and whining beside him with eagerness to share their master's knowledge as they had already shared his wonderment. Yet that which struck the shepherd stiff and astonished as he looked down from the rugged side of Bennangour was but little apparently to be astonished at—chiefly indeed the gloaming, dusking down more grimly over the cottage-fringed shores of the bay of Gower, and a darkly straining silhouette of horses and ploughmen on a neighbouring ridge, the man stretched over his plough-stilts almost fiercely, like a helmsman over a wheel in stormy weather.

"That's Robin Murray doon yonder," murmured the herd, "wonderfu' diligent in business is Robin. He tak's his kane o' the verra last glint o' daylight—afore the nicht cometh when nae man can work! The Lord help us a' to do likewise!"

A burst of cheerful laughter rang out far below. A boyish quarrel adjusted itself by dint of fisticuff and the clatter of birk-bottomed clogs in retreat. As the sound died up the hard winter highway, there came from somewhere also a drift of song. The shepherd-elder shook his head. It was "Maggie Lauder" this, and no psalm of David, Englished by one Francis Roos, that he heard so clearly. Then the Cameronian elder smiled again, better pleased.

"At ony rate a sang is better than a Paraphrase!" he said; "ye ken when ye hae it." For to the Cameronian these human hymns added by a lax and uncovenanted General Assembly were little less than anathema.

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But again the same "minced oath" broke from Anton's lips, so vigorously this time that Tyke and Tod, his ministrant collies, slunk aside in fear, casting anxiously back in their canine consciences for what of transgression undiscovered or duty undone might bring their master's hazel "clickie" whirling about their ears.

But it was to a spot far down the slope of Bennangour that the keen grey eyes of their lord were directed. Beyond the village, beyond the kirk and the manse, set on the opposite braeface and backed by the sea as by a pearl-coloured curtain hung across the valley, Anton MacMillan saw the dark and solemn towers of Castle Gower, and, strung across them like a fairy necklace, certain bright points which told of lighted chambers and festal cheer.

That might well be, for it was Christmas night. But Anton MacMillan had never heard of the festival save as one of the whims of that Scarlet Woman who, on her Seven Hills, continues to observe times and seasons and so delude the unwary and uncovenanted.

"There will be great doings doon by," muttered the herd, as he resumed his long swinging heather stride, the dogs cowering at heel in uncertainty as to his mood. "Forty year hae I herded Bennangour, clear day and mirk nicht, but never hae I seen the great Hoose o' Castle Gower shining as if auld Gregory Glendonwyn had herded the stars o' heaven into his windows, as Tyke and Tod there micht drive a wheen silly sheep into a bucht!

And indeed it was something far out of the common which had set the great gaunt house of Castle Gower alight from turret to porter lodge, brought out Gregory Glendonwyn's laced coat with the gold stuff on the collar and sleeve, (the same in which he had bowed the knee to the King in Edinburgh at that never-to-be-forgotten royal visit), and sent every grey

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domestic and elderly stable boy to door and window in a tremulous agony of anticipation.

The two sons of the house were coming home, the elder, Rupert Glendonwyn from the ends of the earth, the younger, John, only from the college of Edinburgh. But, as was natural, it was for Rupert, the heir, that the preparation was being made. Jock, poor lad, (so the servants averred) might have gone and come a score of times and found no more slaughter of fatted calves in Castle Gower than a slice or two of cold meat from the butler's pantry, and no more illumination than was involved in lighting his own solitary bed-room candle at the table in the back hall.

But Rupert—ah, for his first-born this crusty old Gregory must order up the best bottles of port, dusted and cob-webbed, from the cellar. He must himself taste and approve once more the Tallisker which his friend Roy MacAlister of Cleishterran had sent him in the year '20. The boy would be cold. He would be tired. It was a pity that he had refused the family carriage and begged that a horse might be sent to wait him at the Cross Keys in Drumfern, sixteen long Scots miles away.

"Ah," chuckled Gregory Glendonwyn, "that was like mine own son. Even as I was when a young man, so is this son of mine old age—only better; Gregory—better with benefit of travel and knowledge of the world such as did not in Scotland fall to the lot of a plain country gentleman when the eighteenth century was in its last quarter."

The Laird of Gower sat in his great chair of black oak watching the old butler Grierson come and go. From his chimney-corner he cast an occasional glance of approval at the clean cut sparkle of the glass and silver on the white cloth.

"It is indeed well-befitting," he mused, "that I should rejoice to welcome my son—Agneta's first-born

THE COAT OF MANY COLOURS 7

—after years of absence. Grierson, why on earth do you trot in and out like a new-made elder at his first sacrament? Is everything not ready for Mr. Rupert?"

Duncan Grierson, the ancient butler of Castle Gower, lifted his hand to his brow in a semi-military salute. He and Gregory Glendonwyn had served in the Border Fencibles together, what time the first Napoleon was mustering his galleys under the guns of every French port from Dunkirk to Brest, and the memory of their brief military service was precious to them both. Indeed for short periods and while talking over these old days, these two almost forgot which was master and which man.

"Na, Castle Gower," Grierson replied, with slow emphasis, "this is no a time when we are likely to forget aught that can mak' the return o' the young maister less memorable. There is never a servant that shelters under the roof o' the Glendonwyns but will do his duty this nicht. There's even that halfling laddie, Tammas Faithful. I declare he hasna forgotten a single siller fork at the table-settin'—him that has never laid a claith even in the servant's ha', withoot makin' a mistak' for forty year! Aye, even thrawn auld Sarah Dumplin doon at the village—her that was the laddie's foster-mither and reared him frae a week auld, has brocht up a muckle pot o' the crab-jeely he was sae fell fond o' when he was a laddie!"

Gregory Glendonwyn nodded well-pleased. It was indeed fitting that the heir of all the Glendonwyns should be honoured upon his return to his father's house.

"Yes, yes," he said, "all is indeed in readiness, and I'm sure that you will not find Rupert ungrateful. He was ever generous and high spirited from his youth up, and I cannot believe that these qualities should have forsaken him during the years he has spent abroad."

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"Na, na," muttered the old butler, busying himself at the sideboard, "Maister Rupert will be Maister Rupert to the end o' the chapter. And we will a' lie doon and mak' oursel's door-scrapers and hall-mats for him to dight his feet on!"

"Very properly so," said Gregory Glendonwyn, who had caught the spirit but not the exact letter of the old man's speech, "the grandson of a peer of Ireland, the heir to an ancient name and to the estates which my son inherits from me will never, I trust, lack due respect in his native county. Though, indeed there is a reckless and disloyal spirit abroad, which seeks to overturn both church and state in a common destruction. Have you noticed any symptoms of such like in the servants' hall, Grierson? Speak openly, sir!"

A curious light shone for a single instant in the old man's eyes, but they were bent upon the floor, and so far as words were concerned he answered meekly enough.

"Weel, Laird Gregory, I dinna ken. I dinna mind o' ocht that could be caa'ed a hangin' maitter, as it were. But noo, when I bethink me, it's fac as daith that Tammas Faithful refused flatly to sup his parritch the ither mornin', declarin' and threepin' doon my throat that he was intitled to ham an' eggs—aye, even though twice telled that the parritch was made o' the best meal and the same as your honour sups yoursel'! And there's Mary Geddes, the guise-herd, an' it please your honour—faith—that lassie winna sae muckle look at a red herrin' for her supper, but maun hae her pease-brose and bannocks like a leddy. Oh, as ye say, Laird, it's fair awesome what thae commonalty are comin' to in this generation wi' their whims and whigmaleeries. But I hae seen that in the green tree whilk is noo the dry.—Aye, aye, Duncan Grierson has seen it comin' ever since that misleard Reform Bill, and a' the weaver

THE COAT OF MANY COLOURS 9

bodies gaun bummin' aboot the country wi' drums and banners—the puir feckless bodies, and instead o' decently caain' the shuttle to provide barley bannocks an' guid caller well-water for their bairns, they maun frequent publics and drink tippenny yill, aye, even brandy and claret wine like gentrice—sirce me! But I doubt na, these are the times spoken of in the Prophet Daniel, the seeventh and aucht chapters, as guid Maister Aiblins pointed oot in his lecture and addection last Sabbath mornin' when your honour was ower by at Dr. Cæsar's kirk—

“That will do, Grierson,” said his master, sharply, “when I wish for any information about goose-girls and silly bletherin' pulpiteers like Simeon Aiblins I will not fail be slack for it. In the meantime go to the hall door and keep a sharp look out for the arrival of your young master. When you hear his horse turn into the drive, do not fail to advise me!”

“And nicht your honour hae ony commands aboot Maister John, when he arrives frae the college at Edinbra’?” said the old man, lifting his eyes for one instant to those of his master, and dropping them instantly with a look so shrewd and keen that it seemed like the edge of a steel instrument. But the Laird of Castle Gower, intent only upon the coming of his first-born, had no eyes save for the door by which he was to enter, and no ears save for the gravel of the avenue up which he would ride his horse.

“John?” repeated Gregory Glendonwyn vaguely—

“Aye, John—your honour has twa sons, ye will mind,” grunted the old butler with another of his quaint secret glances, “Maister John is comin' hame by the Enbra' coach the nicht. Ye had the letter yoursel'!”

“Ah, yes, of course,” said the Laird, moving uneasily in his chair, “well, John can see me in the morning. If he is hungry, give him anything that was

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left from lunch. I desire to dine alone with Mr. Rupert to-night. I have much to say that is not for a callant's ears like John's. Take him into your pantry, Grierson, and see that you do not contaminate him with any of your infernal church-and-state claptrap. For, though I have known you for fifty years, Duncan Grierson, I do believe that at heart you are little better than a rebel and a dissenter—yes, a low dissenter and Cameronian!”

The old man held up his hands.

“Your honour, your honour,” he cried, in great apparent horror, “what has moved ye to say sic a thing, when you and me hae been at the wars thegither, and ye hae heard me express mysel’ time an’ again, as it were, mair forcibly than circumspectly. What mair can a man do to prove himsel’ loyal to baith kirk and state than to be ready upon occasion wi’ a guid braid Scots aith?”

“That will do, Grierson,” said the Laird of Gower with a wave of his hand in dismissal, “go down as I bid you and wait for my son in the hall.”

The door closed upon the most ancient retainer of the family of Glendonwyn of Castle Gower. His master rose from his chair, and pushing aside the tapestry curtains of the dining room window, bent his heavy brows together in a vain attempt to pierce the darkness of the avenue. He was looking for Joseph, the son of his heart, and aching for the first glint of the coat of many colours with which, from his youth up, he had adorned him.

As for the other, there was a plate of cold meat for him in the butler's pantry.

II

THE HUSKS WHICH THE SWINE DID EAT.

BUT meantime Joseph and his brother Reuben had forgathered without leave of Jacob, and lo!, both young men made light of the jealousies of the ancient family out of Ur of the Chaldees from whose loins they had sprung.

Joseph, on this occasion the elder, himself in spite of his fine coat, proved no tell-tale, no supplanter, and his brother had not an ounce of sulks in his composition. Yet a jolly Joseph, a pliant Reuben—can they not wring a father's heart between them, to the full as bitterly to-day, as if they had been ancient cattle kings pasturing their herds from the pleasant hill of Tabor even unto that Mount Sinai in Arabia.

It was in the yard of the Cross Keys Inn at Drumfern and at that shoulder-polished angle of gable against which a certain Gauger Burns had so often leaned that the two young men met.

The coach had run heavily all the way down from the Beef Tub, snow clogging the wheels, and the horses tired to a grey lather with the increasing softness of the roads. It was the same storm which, long threatening from the north, had rendered the atmosphere of the seaboard parish of Gower so grim and grey on the eve of Christmas day.

There were half-a-dozen college blades upon the top of the "Rover," some of whom had been mighty lively with pea-shooter and catapult when they left Edinburgh in the morning. But after the change-

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house at the Summit with its sloppy discomfort out of doors, the clothes, steaming wet, hung to dry before the kitchen fire, the slatternly scolding landlady, and the worse than indifferent fare, the joyous company of the morning had fallen mostly silent, hardly even rousing itself to a momentary exchange of flouts and jeers, when a reference to some college story, well-worn and proven, now for the first time failed to wake the usual contagion of youthful laughter.

Last to quit these attempts at a general enlivenment was a tall lad with a floss of fair hair crisping under his college cap, a little pale of face and thin of cheek, perhaps, but with a blue eye so sunny-bright that not even the dank wretchedness of that December afternoon could in the least cloud or overcast its azure clearness.

His companions for the most part addressed this youth either brusquely as "Glen" or with reprehensible flippancy as "My Lord Bishop." While he, in delivering his counter strokes of collegiate wit, referred to them severally as "Writs," "Captions," "Scales," "Sugarbags," "Leeches," or "Lancets" according to the profession, legal, mercantile, or Æsculapian whose heights they were endeavouring to scale by the ladder of university training.

It is not necessary to report at full length these dashing attacks, those brilliant ripostes of verbal fence. For college jests, like certain kinds of wine, purple vintages of Valtellina and the utmost Balkans, may be quite incomparable to drink on the spot with the groaning and dripping of the ancient wine-presses in the ear, but are fitted neither for keeping nor yet for transportation. (Which, parenthetically, is the reason why no good novel of university life has ever yet been written—except perhaps "Alec Forbes.")

Suffice it that when the "Rover" coach decanted its stamping and cloak-shaking load at the inn door, John

HUSKS WHICH SWINE DID EAT 13

Glendonwyn was met by such a reek of "Bogie Roll" and "Irish Blackguard" that he retired coughing and sneezing to the more honest ammoniacal odours of the stables. It was market day at Drumfern, and vehicles of every description, set at all angles as to shafts and covered with all manner of tarpaulins to keep off the sleety drizzle, encumbered the yard of the "Cross Keys" in regular and lugubrious files.

It was a rough place at the best of times. For the great coach inns were already beginning to degenerate into pot-houses, as the ravening iron monsters of the rail rushed snorting past them, and the exigencies of traffic drove the old coaches more and more into the corners of the land, much as the Jutes and Angles had driven the ancient races into the fastnesses, insular and peninsular, of Albion and Armorica.

But to-day the Cross Keys held a draft of drovers, swearing indiscriminately in Irish and Scottish, high-flavoured like their several tobaccos, and ready with fist and shillalah for any thing in the way of "divarsion."

So it chanced that John Glendonwyn, Bachelor of Arts. student in divinity at the University of Edinburgh and proximate presentee to the patrimonial parish of Gower, being in pursuit of peace and the quiet life, naturally ran his head all unwitting into a very peck of trouble.

As he came round the corner, he had recognisance of a swaying mass of bodies, from which now and then an arm would flicker up and a sprig-o'-the-sloe descend with a resonant crack upon some convenient skull. John, who, though he possessed plenty of the courage of his race, loved not strife for its own sake, was turning away, when his eye, unconsciously analysing the pack with the trained judgment of an ex-football player, reported that the centre of the disturbance was a young man who stood hatless and di-

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shavelled in the midst, defending himself boldly but, unequally against an ignoble throng of drovers and stableyard loafers.

A thin stream of blood trickled irregularly down his forehead. He struck out wildly, now at this assailant, now at that, his flushed face and labouring breathing showing that, apart from numbers, he was in poor condition and quite overmatched—or, as John would have expressed it, “pumped out.” Which, indeed, seeing the odds against him, was small wonder.

In another moment John Glendonwyn had dropped his wet cloak upon the stable litter, snatched a spoke from a broken-down gig-wheel, and, crying aloud “Out of the way, you cowards,” flung himself headlong into the battle. The odds would still have proved too great, and the champion of the oppressed might in his turn have been incontinently overthrown, had not one of the collegians, looking from a window like Sister Anne, observed the unequal fray.

“Glen’s in a fight, you fellows,” he cried, “all hands to the help of My Lord Bishop!”

And so from the back door of the inn poured a fresh army upon the assailants’ flank, even as Blucher broke upon the Hundred Days’ Emperor at Waterloo.

In one hot and multitudinously whirling minute all was over. Drover and straw-sucking cornerman were flying down the street, and the victorious collegers were re-entering the inn, supporting rescuer and rescued with loud voices and equal arms.

At the door of the parlour, the young man who had been so effectually succoured turned upon Glendonwyn with the hand and words of thanks. The hand dropped. The words failed.

“John!”

“Rupert!”

And in another second, all jealousies and quarrels forgotten, this Joseph had in the foreign fashion

HUSKS WHICH SWINE DID EAT 15

(which is also Oriental and Biblical) clasped Reuben to his heart and kissed him on both cheeks—Joseph, for all his fine coat, kinder to Reuben than he deserved. So, at least, it seemed to be now.

With true Scottish shamefacedness John Glendonwyn submitted, wishing, however, that the reconciliation had happened elsewhere than in the tap-room of an inn, and before other company than a half-score of reckless, mocking lads from college.

Nevertheless, he turned upon his friends with that singular charming dignity which he could assume upon occasion.

"This is my brother, Rupert," he said, "home from a long stay abroad. Rupert, these are my class-mates and fellow-travellers."

"And I am deucedly obliged to you all," quoth the heir of Castle Gower with a large carelessness, "these confounded rascals would have had me down in a minute more. Not that it wasn't my fault to begin with. But the yokels give themselves such confounded airs. However, I will teach them different before I have done with them—that is if they live anywhere in the vicinity of Castle Gower.

And despite his slim form, he looked as if he could make good his words.

* * * * *

So in this fashion the brothers remade the friendship which long absence on Rupert's part and perhaps some trifle of jealousy on that of his junior had clouded for a time. And in the inn parlour of the Cross Keys there was clinking of glasses and the sound of stampings and shoutings, not so much mirthful as loud. For the prodigal returned from a far land evidently considered this a more promising spot wherein to kill the fatted calf than in the gloomy dining room of Castle Gower, and face to face with his father.

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Now, though Rupert's face was flushed with wine and his voice exceeding jovial and loud, his hand shook pitifully. For there were a sheaf of papers and a series of summations in his pocket-book which he was in no hurry to show to his father, the proud old man at that moment sitting by the fire-place at Castle Gower, with his ear turned eagerly towards the avenue on whose gravel he already heard the feet of the horse that would bring his eldest son back to him.

And John Glendonwyn, who though no ascetic, loved not wine by nature or habit, watched with a slowly saddening face this brother who from his youth up had been held before him as a god. Time after time he took his arm and strove to lead him away.

"Our father is waiting for you," he whispered, "for his sake—for God's sake, let us get out of this. I know he has thought of nothing else for days and weeks."

But Rupert shook him off with loud good-humour.

"Another toast, and I am with you, Johnnie lad!" he would cry. "If you are to be a parson and preach to us, there is no need for you to begin your sermonising yet awhile. My father has waited very patiently these three years and more. He can well afford to wait another hour, and you and I will ride all the faster when we do start!"

So it chanced that Anton McMillan, shepherd on Bennangour, hearing the noise of shouting far below him, came over the heather and down the boulder-strewn gairy, with that inevitable shepherd's sense of locality which enabled him to avoid rocks and holes as by instinct, to cross streams at far-separated stepping-stones and to take every dyke in his way at the easiest "slap." Leaping into the turnpike with the agility of one-and-twenty, he found two young men struggling for the reins in a hired dog-cart, an indignant and high-spirited saddle-horse rearing and plunging between the shafts.

HUSKS WHICH SWINE DID EAT 17

"What's this," he cried, "laddies? Agree and be ceevil. Market-nicht or no market-nicht, there's nae sense in siccan tulzies! Ah, wad ye!"

He seized a whip with which the elder of the two was valiantly endeavouring to lash him across the face, as he stood holding the horse's head.

"Be canny, noo," he cried warningly "or by my fegs, gin I grip ye by the cuff o' the neck, ye'se come oot o' that gig quicker than ever the pented Queen Jezebel did oot o' the pailace window in Jezreel! Laddie, what did I tell ye?—There—ye camsteery carl, the green grass will serve ye better than gigs and whups and drivin' furiously like unto the son of Nimshi! What's this? What's this, Maister John?—You that (they tell me) are to be a minister and break the bread o' life amang this verra people. What do ye in sic company? Answer me that!"

And John Glendonwyn, recognising in the old Bible-quoting Cameronian herd a well-known character in the country, could only find a few stammering words in reply.

"It is my brother! For God's sake, Anton, help me to get him into the castle without my father seeing him!"

But this—though the groom who had brought over the horses to Drumfern aided and abetted as best he could, riding forward at speed to warn the butler, and though Duncan Grierson lied his most plausible in a good cause, proved to be far beyond human power to effect.

For Rupert, noisily venting his determination to resist all coercion, utterly refused to go to his room by way of the back staircase. He had come three thousand miles to see his father. He was a good fellow, his father, and would pay his debts for him.—They were all in a conspiracy to keep him from his father. John in especial was a young traitor who wanted to

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supplant him. To his father he would go—and at once.

And in the heat of the altercation the door which led to the hall opened and Gregory Glendonwyn came proudly in, ever the master of his own house, erect as a lance, his grey hair falling over his high forehead and his great dark eyes flashing from beneath his grizzled eyebrows. His lips were firmly compressed, and so threatening was their master's whole demeanour that all stood back and left the two sons and the father alone upon the stone-flagged kitchen floor. John was still half supporting his brother, and endeavouring to persuade him to go quietly up to his bed-room by assuring him that he would assuredly be better in the morning. The elder was struggling and laughing with loud foolish good-humour.

"Rupert!"

The sound of his father's voice partially sobered the young man. He held out his hand with a kind of pitiful gravity.

"Very sorry, sir," he said, "but the fools said I was not to see you to-night.—And the fact is I must see you—ruined if I don't sir—owe a deuce of a lot of money, and the wretched Jews are pressing me."

During these disconnected utterances which Rupert poured out one after the other, he was still in imagination shaking his father's hand, though Gregory Glendonwyn kept his hands fast clenched in each other behind his back. Meantime his brother had been trying to keep him quiet by every means in his power, whispering that this was neither time nor place for such things to be spoken of before servants, that he was not himself and had better go to his room. John's obvious anxiety attracted his father's attention.

"Stand away, sir!" he thundered suddenly, "I mean you, sir, who have brought your brother to his father's house in such a state. Grierson, give your

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young master an arm. Let us go in by the front door of Castle Gower. It shall not be said that the heir of the Glendonwyns was smuggled into the home of his ancestors like a thief in the night."

And so these three, Gregory Glendonwyn, his son Rupert, the child after his own heart, and the ancient and faithful servitor of their house took their way out of the lighted kitchen into the darkness, and so through the shrubberies to the great entrance of Castle Gower which the middle-aged "boy" Thomas Faithful was holding open for them with the water running down his furrowed cheeks.

John Glendonwyn followed behind with a sick heart. Indeed he has never truly liked the smell of wet laurel since that night when he walked in the footsteps of these three dusky figures up the broad stone steps on which the first flakes of the Christmas snowstorm were just beginning to fall.

The chill bite of the air quickly made Rupert sleepy, and after putting a bundle of papers into his father's hand, he sank drowsily into an arm-chair on which Grierson with an impassive face presently covered him up with a travelling rug.

When John entered half-an-hour afterwards he found his father still sitting in his place at the head of the table, the dinner plates and glasses pushed from him untouched. The place thus cleared was strewn with papers. Gregory Glendonwyn looked up with a whitened face from some calculations he was making on the back of a letter.

"What do you want?" he demanded abruptly, as John stood in the doorway uncertain whether to advance or retreat.

"Only to know if I can be of any use?" faltered the lad.

Gregory Glendonwyn waved his hand towards his unconscious heir, as in a French trial, the judge draws

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the attention of the accused to the *pièces-de-convictions*.

"You have done enough for one night," he said, stonily, "you may rest satisfied. You have made my son a sot. *He* has made me a bankrupt. But, see—understand this, if you think to benefit yourself by encouraging my poor Rupert to drink himself to death, you are mistaken, sir. You can go. Remember, I have my eye upon you and your schemes. Ever since you were a child you have hated him. I understand that! But it will help you nothing. I, his father, will keep him safe in spite of you—aye, in spite of himself!"

How blankly unjust were the words John well knew, but he was far too much accustomed to such treatment from his father to resent the charge. Yet he had knocked one of his comrades into the fire-place of the Cross Keys' parlour only for whispering in his ear, "I say, old fellow, if your brother runs the rig like this, you'll find yourself heir to Castle Gower some fine morning before long!"

But now since this man who libelled him was his own father, John Glendonwyn only bent his head and went out through the door with many unspoken words swelling in his heart.

III

ENGAGED PERSONS

“**N**O, John, it will not do. I told you so before you went away. I tell you so now. You and I are engaged to be married. Our fathers and mothers after the flesh arranged the matter without consulting us—even as they did that other business of introducing us into the world. Well—*Stet!* as the printers say. *Kismet!*—Necessity has no laws. That is correct, my Latinist. Only, I pray you, do not think it necessary to make love to me. Do not feel obliged to dance attendance upon me when you would far rather be lying by the waterside scribbling poetry, or if fates were favourable, looking into the blue eyes of little Fairlie Glendinning—oh, I know all about that—I am not in the least jealous. If I could be, things might be better between us!”

It was a tall and handsomely moulded girl who was speaking in a quiet unemotional tone and the most matter-of-fact way, as she watered fern and rock-plant in the tiny conservatory attached to a large, plain-featured, white-washed mansion on the outskirts of the town of Kilgour. In a word Veronica Martha Crossraguel Cæsar, eldest but far from only daughter of the Reverend Augustus Cæsar, D. D., minister of the parish of Kilgour, commander-in-chief of the town thereto attached, and known through the whole Scottish southlands, by excellence, title, and desert as “The Doctor.”

She was speaking to John Glendonwyn, a slim gradu-

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ate of the University of Edinburgh, younger son of the considerable landowning house of the Glendonwyns of Castle Gower. The young man had been following the girl about, his hands in his pockets, gracefully abandoning himself as was his wont, to idleness and the pleasure of watching another at work.

Tall beyond the ordinary height, his clean-cut symmetry of limb and pale regularity of feature told of blood and breeding. Generally careless and even indolent in bearing, there was an eager boyish look in his eyes when roused or interested which before now had proved mightily attractive to women. Calm blue eyes and a broad brow gave promise of future power, when a certain shadow as of imminent fate should pass from the young face, and habitual self-repression cease to thin and firm the delicate lips.

John Glendonwyn listened to his companion with a faint smile of amused tolerance. He did not greatly heed her words. Veronica was always saying something, generally something fatiguing. Yet there was this to be said for Vera, he owned—she never cared a brass farthing whether you answered her or not. John for the most part did not answer. He preferred to listen and watch.

But on this occasion the girl seemed determined to drive him into a corner. It was for this very reason that she had brought him out to the manse greenhouse, where through a haze of ferns and geraniums one could look down upon the estuary of Gower—at high tide a blue and rippling sheet of water sparkling and dimpling in the sun, but now this cheerless forenoon of one of the last days of the year, a dreary prospect of muddy ditches and sands pale and dangerous, with the river running gloomily through a deep and winding chocolate-coloured trench in the midst.

Suddenly the girl turned upon her silent lover, a threatening expression in the way in which she men-

aced him with her watering-can. This weapon was painted a bright arsenical green, and as he looked at it John Glendonwyn wondered idly why that colour should be specially connected with gardening, while (upon another social plane) the cans which he carried from the well in little Fairlie Glendinning's back-yard after she came back from school were as consistently of a royal blue. Again, to go a little farther afield, why were carts painted scarlet-orange, kitchen-doors indigo, and window sashes white? Why were grates japanned black, kitchen flags ornamented with mystic whorls and Runic crosses executed in pipe clay—why, for the matter of that—

“John Glendonwyn, you are more than enough to provoke a saint! What do you suppose I brought you here for?”

“Why, to talk to me!” answered John, calmly. “It is a good place to talk, and you have been doing it some considerable time, you know.”

“Exactly, sir! But when you are talked to, you are expected to listen! And when you listen, you are expected to answer.”

“But did you ask me anything?” inquired the young man, still more serenely.

“Did I ask you anything?” The girl stamped her foot,—“No—I did *not* ask you anything. I only tried to get a little sense and care for the future into that idle, foolish, selfish head of yours. Oh, I know you, John Glendonwyn. You think, because your father does not like you and wishes you out of his house that you are entitled to pose as a martyr. So you lounge and laze through life, and pretend to have measured the heights and depths of despair. Ugh—I have no patience with you!”

“All the more reason, then,” returned John Glendonwyn, sweetly, “that I should have a little with myself!”

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Something in his attitude irritated the girl intensely. She set down the watering-can and planted herself directly between him and the door.

At which the youth smiled and disclaimed with a wave of his hand any intention of making a bolt of it. The girl passed the flippancy over without comment, being, as it was her nature to be, hot upon her mission.

"Now listen, John Glendonwyn," she almost palpitated the words, gripping her hands till the nails dented into the flesh, and her small even teeth quivered upon her lips as if ready to bite into their indignant curl, "you have had your trials and you may have greater, but at any rate you won't be any the worse for hearing what one honest girl who wishes you well thinks of you and them."

"Veronica dear," urged the young man softly, "is it really necessary? I have heard it so often!"

"No," cried the girl, "that is just it—you have *not* heard! You have been unhappy at home. You have made yourself more so than you need—so that I have hesitated to speak plainly for fear of appearing cruel. But now I will be plain——"

"That you can never be!" exclaimed the youth, smiling upon her as indolently as ever.

The girl clasped her hands in front of her breast with a sharp little *clack* of anger. "Oh—oh—oh—!" she almost sobbed, "that is just the hopelessness of it! You will not be serious even for a moment. I tell you I will not have your cheap-jack compliments and '*Veronica dear*'-ings. We are engaged, as I said before, solely because our fathers made the bargain years ago over a bottle of port——"

"Three bottles at least—if your father was present!" put in the young man in an undertone.

"We are engaged—I repeat—but we do not love one another! I like you. Yes, of course I do (for John Glendonwyn had bowed to the ground at the

words) or I should not be taking this trouble with such a God's Own Ass at eleven o'clock in the morning—my mother going demented all the while because her parlour is not dusted, my father wondering what is become of his mid-sermon bread-and-milk, and half-a-dozen out-at-elbow brats clamouring above stairs for buttons and shoe-strings, patches to their clothes and shirts to their backs. You surely do not think *I* have nothing to do in the world but dawdle with you the day by the length—as my mother will tell me presently that I have been doing.”

“If she has need of you,” said John, “surely she will call you!”

“No,” cried the girl, “that is just what she won’t. You do not know my mother. She will take it out of me instead, after you are gone. Oh, you may look shocked, but I am a plain-spoken young woman, and I have to observe the fifth commandment so hard all day with hands and feet that my tongue may be excused if it trips over it a little sometimes!”

“You do work hard Vera,” said John, penitently, “and as for me I am a lazy, selfish brute.”

“A brute you are not,” said the girl reaching out her hand to him with swiftly contrite impulsiveness, “but the adjectives are all right. I would make a little litany of them if I were you, and say them over and over to myself night and morning!”

“Oh, I could manage that,” cried her companion, a light springing into his eyes, “I, John Glendonwyn, B. A., student in theology, am lazy. I am vain. I am foolish. I am a bore to myself and a nuisance to my friends. As it was in the beginning and so on. Amen! How does that strike you for a start?”

“Ah, John, you are making a game of this also, as you do of everything,” said Veronica Cæsar, looking down a little sadly and withdrawing her hand.

“You say you do not love me,” said the young man,

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"but do you not think that if you did, you could make me something different from what I am?"

"No, John," Veronica went on more slowly, "I cannot by force of will love you or any other. Sometimes I think I am not made to love any man with the love that men want from women. There are some of us like that. Hospital nurses, sisters of mercy, matrons of orphan and rescue homes—these should be such women as I—women whom God has made barren of the love of woman and man, but with hearts that overflow with pity. I do not need to seek any of these spheres, for I have mine near at hand—in a father who, true and great-hearted as he is, must be tended like a baby, a mother—well, I will say nothing of my mother—and a dozen children all younger than myself. No, John, I will remain engaged to you as long as you like, but I will never marry you unless, my heart is changed and the very foundations of my life are torn up."

"Vera," said John gently laying his hand on hers, "you and I have both had enough to try us. Can we not look forward to setting up a new home, and making each other happy there? The thing is worth the trial, surely?"

The girl shook her head, though she smiled more tenderly than before.

"No," she said, sadly, "I would never be a good wife, but oh, think what an aunt I would make! You do not really want me either. You would not be happy with me, John. Our fathers' plain, business-like arrangement was better than any slim pretence of affection. You, the younger son of a great house were to marry me, the eldest daughter of a man of weight in the church. You were to be a minister of that church also. They considered as little your fitness for the office of the ministry, as they did whether you and I were suited to each other. Why, indeed, should they? Your father

would present you to the living, at present held by a warming pan of the name of Aiblins. He could easily be provided for through your father's money and my father's influence. All would be for the best. Your father would give you some additional allowance and mine would advance your interests in quarters high and ecclesiastic. So the good children would marry and live happily ever after. Selah!"

"You have it well by rote, Vera," said John Glendonwyn, "I would that you had it also by heart!"

"Of course I know it by rote," cried the girl, "do I not have it served to me for breakfast, for dinner, and for supper? Not by my father—he is too wise and too good, in spite of the fact that his daughter's life and happiness were no more to him than so many pawns on a chessboard. But my mother distracts me with her eternal yatter about my prospects. Ah, John, she does not know what a small chance there is of her expectations being realised. Only last night she was saying, 'Oh, if only that eldest son who (they tell me) is coming home, should die—you, Vera, would be the Lady of Castle Gower.' And she has even arranged which rooms she is to have when she comes to live with us——"

"God forbid!" cried John devoutly.

"Ah, there again," cried the girl, "you guard yourself, you see. You do not pity me the humiliation of having such things cast up to me day by day and hour by hour!"

"And what would you have me do, Veronica?" said John Glendonwyn, "it is easy to say that this and that should be righted. But if I tell my father that our engagement is at an end, for no reason save that we do not suit each other, he will certainly refuse to present me to the parish, even if he does not turn me for ever from his door. He likes me little enough as it is—even less than you do."

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"Nay, John, that was unkindly said," cried the girl, "and quite unworthy of you! I like you more than any one in the world, after my own father. Aye, and would do more for you—everything indeed except marry you—which would be the greatest unkindness I could do to you, not loving you."

"But I love you, Vera," said the youth, a sudden flash of eagerness lighting his blue eyes, "do not let us break the tie now—such as it is!"

"Ah, no, John, you do not love me," she repeated after him sadly, "you are too young to know what the word means."

"I am older than you by a good year and a half," cried John, indignantly.

"That may be—by the calendar," she said, "but I dare you to deny that I am ten times the man you are. I could go out and earn my living to-morrow. Why, when I was with my Aunt Fisher at Kenmore, I did all the laundry work during the three weeks she was laid up. And the folk at the great house said the things were never better done. Do you think that I would be afraid to face my father and tell him the truth, lest he should turn me out of the house or put another man into a church-living he had promised me?"

"But," objected John Glendonwyn, something less philosophically than before, "I cannot do clear starching and I have no Aunt Fisher. Dig I cannot, and to beg I am ashamed."

"Furthermore there are two things for you to consider. First, would your father really think the less of you for asserting yourself like a man? I am sure in his heart he would not. And again, are you fit to be a minister of any church and explain the way of life to other men, when you have shown so little skill in ordering your own?"

"Your father considers that I am fit enough," re-

torted the student of divinity, "only yesterday he complimented me on my college exercises. It is true—it was not I who did them!"

"College exercises, indeed"; cried Veronica, "do you really think that you can feed a parish of hungry ignorant souls upon college exercises? And as to my father, he is everything that is good and kind—but too deeply concerned for the union he has planned between your fortune and my—my——"

"Your cleverness—say the word, Vera," cried John with a somewhat constrained laugh, "you know you mean it."

"Well, my faculty for carrying things through, if you will. You are a dear good fellow, John, but to tell the truth, you have never waked up to seriousness yet. You are no more fit to be the minister of a parish than to be admiral of the fleet!"

"I know—I know, Vera dear!—You are far better and cleverer than I," said the young man humbly, "you would make ten times as good a minister as I. But surely you would not have me turn out one of those hair-brained enthusiasts and high-fliers who are forever bawling themselves hoarse about Crown Rights and ministerial efficiency, and setting themselves up against patronage and the law. That would be a strange thing from the daughter of Dr. Augustus Cæsar of Kilgour!"

"Do not confuse the issue," said the girl sharply, "your Logic classes ought to have taught you so much! You know that you are not fit to be a minister, and I know that I am not fit to be your wife. All the same, if I were in your shoes I would walk straight in to my father and have it out with him, once for all."

Then for the first time John Glendonwyn lost his temper.

"I am not fit to be a minister of my father's parish, am I not?" he cried, flushing with swift anger, "Then I

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am not fit to kiss your hand, madam. Well, at any rate there remains a year or so in which I need not trouble my head about either you or the Kirk of Scotland. My brother and I are pretty good friends at present, and—well—with his help I can try to climb the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil from the other side. I am too young, and I presume too innocent for you, my dear! *Eh bien*, a year or two with Rupert will mend both particulars. Perhaps so deeply experienced a lady as Miss Veronica Crossraguel Cæsar will like her friend the better for that!"

"I will always like him better for appearing to be what he is," said the girl. "If you think that your brother will help you to a career for which you are better fitted, I shall rejoice. For I *am* your true friend, though you do not think so to-day, John. More than that, I do believe that some day you will awake and cast off your idleness and selfishness as Samson tore off the Philistine withes."

"Ah, but, Vera, you forget," said John, smiling again, "the Philistines got Samson in the long run!"

"Yes," retorted the girl, with sudden fierceness, "because a woman cropped the locks of his strength when he was asleep."

"Ah," said John Glendonwyn subtly, "you mean Fairlie Glendinning!"

The girl's cheek flushed a swift fiery red, and her proud lips quivered angrily.

"So little do I mean Fairlie," she answered, "that I think it would be the best thing you could do to—but it is useless to tell you *now* what I think would be best for you. You were little likely to take my advice as things were. Now you have told me that you despise both it and me. More than that you spoke a bitter word about Fairlie Glendinning. In return, for I am no turn-the-other-cheek damsel, I will render one to you. I said that like Samson you were asleep and I

bade you beware. I need not have troubled myself. For, however sound you may be asleep, you have no locks of strength to be cut. When you become a minister let your first text be, 'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excell!'"

John Glendonwyn turned pale to the lips. He seized his hat from where it lay among the flower-pots. Vera Cæsar's abandoned watering-rose had dripped freely upon it. He shook the drops off almost fiercely, as a wandering apostle might have done the dust of a city for a testimony against its ingratitude.

"You have hit the mark at last, Veronica," he said, "your reproach has gone home. Some day I, John Glendonwyn, whom you despise, will make you unsay these words."

And without any leave-taking he went out.

The girl stood still where he had left her, and looked after him striding savagely down the gravel, as if he would grind every stone to powder under his heel. "God send that day soon!" she said, softly, to herself.

VI

THE PASSION OF FRIENDSHIP

IT is but little wonder that John Glendonwyn felt himself ill-used by fate and generally at strife with the world as he walked away from the manse of Kilgour. That he had been indolent and selfish in certain ways he did not deny. At college his natural quickness of parts had made the hurdles of examinations and degrees easy to be overleaped. Almost from his birth he had been destined for the ministry of the Church of Scotland, so that there was no mystery or eager forthlooking as to his future. All had been arranged by his forbears to save him trouble.

As the young lady herself had so clearly put it, he was to be presented to the excellent rural living of Gower, and he was to marry Veronica, the eldest daughter of Dr. Augustus Cæsar of the neighbouring town of Kilgour. There was indeed no particular hardship in either part of his appointed lot. He would rather of course have gone into the army, but for generations the valuable family living had been a sacred obligation in the Glendonwyn traditions. And as to Veronica—well, he had known Vera Cæsar all his life. She had been presented to him as his destiny from the time when they ran together in the spring woods, constructing eligible residences out of shards of pottery and posies of primroses and daffodils. John had seen girls he thought prettier—one in particular—(he still was simple enough to blush at the thought), but Vera was bright and clever, and if only she would stop

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sermonising, John did not doubt that in time he and she would get on very well together.

He was a generous lad and owned readily in any company that Veronica was a hundred times too good for him. But she never could let either well or ill alone—which last John Glendonwyn was all too ready to do. Then if Vera liked him, as she affirmed she did, she always liked him to be something else than what he was. Whereas the young man's mind was all too apt to dwell on a cheek of clear lily-white that turned to the delicate hue of the rose-leaf at his approach, and lips that never lectured or sermonised him, either upon sins of omission or concerning those of commission.

So it was with something very like a sigh that John Glendonwyn turned out of the main street of the town into a parallel road, scantily and irregularly lined with houses, at the top of which stood the Academy of Kilgour, that ancient abode of humane learning, from which so many hundreds of lads had gone forth to college and the liberal professions.

There were no great luxuries of equipment or elaboration of scholastic furniture about Kilgour Academy in the end of the fourth decade of the nineteenth century. But the root of the matter was there, and a hundred school-boards could not greatly have bettered the result. John Glendonwyn's friend and former Rector, upon whom he was now proceeding to call, was one Henry Colstoun, a man whose name and fame shall never be forgotten in Kilgour while fire burns and water runs—the source, origin, and only begetter (sometimes by methods drastic and Spartan enough) of a series of scholars, artists, and men of letters whose fame has gone to the ends of the earth, but every man of whom is glad and proud to bear testimony that, saving what experience has taught him, he has learned little since he left Henry Colstoun's First Class.

Mr. Colstoun had been a favourite pupil of Melvin

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at Aberdeen, the first Scottish Latinist of his time. Like his master, he was a bursar of that ancient and famous university, and, though himself a man of the south, had brought away from the granitic north a certain hardness of manner and martinet precision which was purely external and disciplinarian. Out of school hours a more kindly and tender-hearted man than Henry Colstoun never lifted a ferule or assisted a costive memory with a pair of taws. But in Kilgour Academy between the hours of nine and four, there was no rest for the wicked, neither any ease of body for the idle, the playful, or the mischievous.

The friendship between Mr. Colstoun and John had grown to be of the closest and warmest kind, as indeed was the case with most of the Rector's pupils. When John went to the university it astonished him to find how little he had to learn so far as the classics were concerned, and that his college exercises and examinations were mere child's play in comparison with those to which Mr. Colstoun had accustomed him. But the teacher had accomplished far more for the lad than teaching him the use of his tools. He had made literature to live for him. The characters of Euripides and Plautus were as familiar to him as those of Shakespeare and Scott. He knew Milton by heart, but was not a little puzzled by a curious work from which his master would insist upon reading him extracts, from time to time with infinite gusto and relish. "A new thing in literature" he called it. The book was quaintly titled "*Sartor Resartus*" and had straggled in somewhat irregular fashion through *Fraser's Magazine*, apparently being inserted only when there was a dearth of other matter in the editorial portfolio.

So it was natural enough that John Glendonwyn should devote one of his first mornings at home during the Christmas recess to his friend the Rector. With hands in his pockets, therefore, he turned up the

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long slope of Cottam Street, at the top of which the little Academy of Kilgour was situate. The houses glistened in the winter sunlight. The snow had already hardened and creaked crisply under foot with the sharp falling frost of the morning. A housewife or two stood, broom in hand, on the causeway, shading her eyes and looking after the young man, who walked up the street with a step more than ordinarily quick and alert. He wore a dark blue suit of the plainest fashion, but well-cut and fitted to perfection. A cap of the same material was set well back on his head, showing the crisp ruffle of curls about a smooth boyish brow. There was still, however a slight contraction between the eyes, the result of his interview with Veronica, but as he neared the Academy that also cleared away and he began to hum a tune. The boy's heart leaped strangely within him. There on the roof was the bell which he had so often pulled thrice a day during the last years of his pupilship. For with all his strictness of discipline, Henry Colstoun had so won upon the lad that, perhaps because he felt himself neglected at home, he had begged to be allowed to do any office for the man whom he loved and honoured.

So, not only during his school-days but also afterwards, upon his return from his earlier college sessions John had been accustomed to give his idol much unpaid but highly efficient service in the work of his crowded and understaffed school. Was it the memory of this devoted friendship which quickened his heart and caused him to tread on air as he came within ear-shot of that humming hive of industry?

Possibly so. Yet why did this friend of Henry Colstoun's turn aside from that foot-battered door, by opening which he might have found himself clasping his master's hand in other ten seconds? Why did he so suddenly drop into a listless stroll which carried him just the length of the boy's playground and back

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again? Why did he regard with such mighty assumption of indifference the long slide or "sloy," gleaming black among the white and trampled snow, and regard with such interest the broken ramparts where the First Class boys had entrenched themselves and flown their flag in defiance of the rest of the school? He remarked as a sign that the pugnacity of the race was not falling off "since my time" (the ex-school-boy's *Hegira* and *Anno Domini*) that the brick walls were as plentifully starred with snowballs as ever, and that these were thickest at the point where behind fast-crumbling walls, the Seniors had kept at bay the swarming masses of the School. At more than one place the snow was splattered with crimson as if some one had spilt a bottle of red ink on the spot.

But John knew better.

"That snowball must have been well wetted and left out to dry last night!" he said.

To the returned Bachelor of Arts all this was doubtless most interesting, as is the past to an antlered master of the herd who revisits his ancient stamping-grounds and sniffs the memories of calf-battles fought when his horns wanted even a single tine.

But what induced this dignified collegian, matriculate and graduate of King James's college, to examine with such interest the windows of the infant department? The pupils therein assembled had been but babes in arms when John left the Academy of Kilgour. It was humanly impossible that he could have any acquaintances among them.

But stay, is there not a slim figure in severest black bending over a bunch of children—children whose simple literature is confined to words of one syllable, and alternates between the affirmations (repeated shrilly in chorus) that "Tóm—hád—á—fát—cát" and "Tóm—hád—á—bíg—bát," without so much as

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adding (so poor is the imagination of the compiler of *First Primers*) the obvious consequent that "Tóm—hit—thé—fát—cát—with—thé—big—bát."

Presently however as John passed the window of the infant school for the third time, he saw the bending figure in black standing erect, and revealing a single Gretchen braid of fair hair tied with a pale blue ribbon, a decorous bow of the same being pinned under a full girlish throat. And perhaps at sight of the tall figure through the window, an answering pink fluttered out upon a pair of cheeks a little pale with a school-room's confinement and overmuch "labouring with children."

But at John's next turn he saw only the girl's Gretchen pigtail and the accurately tied blue bow, pendant almost to her waist. But the pretty shoulders were definitely squared for duty, and with a sigh the young man turned away towards the main door of the Academy. Friendship is one of the noblest passions of which the human bosom is capable, so John decided that he would go and see his friend and benefactor Henry Colstoun.

As he opened the door of the classical department, he held it a minute on the jar, enjoying the momentary spasm of fear which came over him with the thought that he was late. For he could see the First Latin Class toeing the well-remembered chalk line. The old black sheepskin bindings were in the hands of each—Gunn's Livy, Smith's Corderius, Melvin's Prose Exercises.

Henry Colstoun was striding up and down along the front of his class as of old, using his desk as a kind of pivot and with difficulty recalling himself from a disquisition upon the primitive Latin drama, to cross-examine some suspect upon points of grammar in the portion of the day.

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"What, John Glendonwyn! Let us have your news from the old South Brig," he cried. "Are you going to bring back all the prizes with you this year?"

As the words were being spoken John was shaking his old master by the hand amid the hushed awe of the school. Of all privileges of Being-Grown-Up this seemed to them the greatest. To laugh, even to joke with Mr. Colstoun, standing easily the while with one foot on the step of his desk, and even turning the leaves of the sacred Register, which, long before Education Bills and H. M. Inspectors, was called religiously twice a-day in Kilgour Academy—what earthly pleasure could surpass that?

The school held its breath while John and the Rector discoursed of high matters—who had got which bur-sary, what he was likely to do in his classes, what classic authors Dunbar and Hasseltine were taking up this year. Mr. Colstoun sniffed at the prize for Latin verse—"newfangled Oxford crambo," he called it. Prose had been thought good enough by Melvin, and he doubted if those who competed for the verse-tagging could write quite as good prose as had been taught by the old grammarian of Aberdeen.

Then came questions as to what he was doing and going to do. Had he thought any more earnestly about his call to the ministry? If so, ought he not to try to persuade his father to allow him to change his profession?

But John had had quite enough of kindred advice and suggestion in a more concrete form from Vera Cæsar that morning already. His attention rapidly wandered, and Mr. Colstoun was not the man to fail in observing it.

"Well, John," he said, "I am terribly short-handed just now. My junior master has gone home ill. What say you to trying a forenoon or two at your old game?"

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The presbytery will be down upon us in a fortnight, like wolves on the fold."

"That," smiled John Glendonwyn, "is surely no great matter. Let every boy have on his Sunday best, every girl her hair tied in a pink bow, get the worshipful magistrates to give the reverend gentlemen a good dinner at the Gower Arms—and I will guarantee you as much flattery from your superiors ecclesiastical and municipal as is good for any man."

"Ah," sighed the Rector, "there is truth in what you say—more's the pity. Schoolmasters are not the only people who need to be examined as to whether they do their duty. But will you come? You used to enjoy the work. You can take the girls' department or the junior classics, just as you like. A little acquaintance with the Rule of Three and the elements of the Latin language is no bad substitute for Sunday clothes and ribbons in the hair even at a Presbyterial examination."

John flushed hotly at the proposal. But at the last words he glanced suspiciously at his old master. He had just then a special and private reason for thinking well of hair tied with ribbons. But Henry Colstoun was fidgetting with his Livy. He desired to get back to his class, which was rustling from dux to booby with a subdued rear-guard action of slyly delivered kicks and pinches, though upon the face of it dwelt deferential serenity and a patient waiting for the master's pleasure.

"Well," he said, stepping back to his desk, and opening the book, which he had been holding in his hand, with his finger in the place, "you can tell me to-morrow. Of course I will expect to pay you the *stipendium*. No labourer is more worthy of his hire than the assistant schoolmaster——"

"Yes," smiled John, "in Mr. Henry Colstoun's

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school—where the Rector does all the work and lets other people get all the credit. But you see my brother has come home, and I owe something to him—even though my father does not care how I come and go.”

“Well, well—we shall see,” said the Rector. “Must you go? Well, lunch time is near. Look round the school a bit while I finish this Livy, and then join us. John Arthur, begin to construe at *stare ad anchoram*.”

In the most casual manner John lounged into the Fourth and Fifth Classrooms, the latter containing the children most recently promoted from the infant department. A hobbledehoy from the First Class, overgrown and bashful, was acting as interim master. But the wads of paper stuck on the blackboards like plums in a pudding, the rattle of falling slates, the squeals and ‘Outches’ hardly even decently suppressed, the constant trampling scuffle of feet, the “Please, sir, Tam Girmory’s stickin’ a preen intil me”—“It’s a lee, I’m no!—*Ye wee tale-pyet. Wait till I get ye oot!*” These and other indications of lax authority met John’s ear and eye as he opened the door.

The young schoolboy-usher—“pupil-teacher” as he was just beginning to be called, came forward sheepishly enough from the blackboard whereon was a pounds-shillings-and-pence sum with two wrong multiplications, which several sharp boys at the top of the class had already detected, and, with the sweet kindness of youth were biding their time to declare.

“Hallo, Martin Fraser, what do you mean by adding whole cubits to your stature in this way?” cried John, delighted to see one who had been in the school when he himself was there, “why, you were only in the Fourth Class yourself when I left! Now, behold, you are teaching it!”

The boy, secretly elated, muttered his pleasure, but stood awkwardly enough looking down. Not that he would have been in the least bashful in the playground

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or was so by nature. But to conduct a conversation in proper English under the eyes and before the pricked ears and open mouths of threescore small boys, needs practise, and tries the newly-appointed pupil-teacher more than muzzles frowning from the deadly imminent breach.

So it was John who had to find the next subject of conversation.

"Well, Martin," he said, genially, "perhaps I am coming to-morrow to give you a hand for an hour or two. How will you like that?"

The boy's face, sorely tried with noise and paper-wads, lighted up momentarily. But at some second thought it clouded over again immediately.

"I shall be very glad, Mister—Mister——" he stammered stiffly.

"Better say 'John Glendonwyn' as you used to do," quoth the Bachelor of Arts, kindly. Then he turned, glanced at the board and spoke in a lower tone.

"Those two first figures ought to be a 6 and an 8," he whispered. "Better change them after I am gone. The young beasts are always trying to pick faults."

"Thank you!" said the boy, without, however, lifting his eyes from the floor.

"What ails the fellow?" thought John as he strolled away, "when I was here Martin Fraser used to be only a bright little vagabond, out of one scrape into another all day long. What can have happened to him? Responsibilities of office, I suppose."

But what Martin Fraser said to himself after John had taken himself off was fitted to cast some light on the question:

"Oh, you need not pretend, Mr. John Glendonwyn," he muttered, 'Call me John.' I'd like 'to call' you over with a paving stone on the nose. I see what you come here for, if the Rector does not. 'So kind to teach

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school in your holidays—friendship for our old head-master'! All lies and stuff, *Mister* John Glendonwyn! It's to be near little Fairlie Glendinning, our cousin whom we don't recognise, that we bring our blue suit and blue tie and blue cap over here, all the way from Castle Gower where we have a butler and horses and fine things. Oh, it is so thoughtful and kind of us, so unpretending—going to be a minister too and marry Miss Veronica. But for the present we mean to make love to little Fairlie, who is an angel, and not fit to be spoken to by a whole pack of such heartless wretches!"

From which secret outburst of the heart—whether or not the subject matter constitutes a true bill against Mr. John Glendonwyn, it is not difficult to diagnose the complaint with which Martin Fraser was suffering.

But to follow the hero, whose head through three chapters has been bent to the blast of reproof and lack of appreciation,—we need not grudge him the eager, anxious, throbbing of the heart, the sense of undefined expectancy, the tremble of hesitation with which he laid his hand on a certain worn door-handle. His eyes shone with the light that never was on sea or land—or indeed anywhere else save in the loving eyes of men and women. His very ears prickled. It was suddenly revealed to him that his trousers were inordinately kneed, his boots so large as almost to obscure the landscape and cover himself with ridicule—however, such fancies are good for youth accustomed to flattery and by no means inapt to think overly well of itself.

All the same we need not grudge this set of curiously pleasurable impressions to John. He had dreed his weird under the cold repellant grey eye of his father, Gregory Glendonwyn. He had endured tribulation under the biting lash of Vera Cæsar's tongue, with, on the whole, as much patience as could reasonably be

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expected from a brisk young man. All vanity and vexation of spirit? Doubtless you are right, O wise man. Yet—to feel all this again, the heart throbbing so, the blood spinning to such a tune, the colour and crispness coming back to that which now is but furrow and grizzle, the light returning to the eye so dimly suffused, the morning glory regenerating the fading day, you would give—ah, rather, O wise man—O prudent woman, what would you *not* give?

Well then, in the meantime, bear a little with John Glendonwyn. Or better still, if once on a day you looked so, trembled so, stammered so, turned handle so—read on, and reconstitute the days that were, in the record of the days that shall continue to be, till the wrack of all things dies down to glowing ashes, in the *favilla* and *dies irae* of the universe.

At any rate, John turned the handle of the infant school door. A warm hum met his senses—to him the very breath of life and love. In reality the room was more than a little close. He saw blackboards at various angles perched here and there like pier glasses. Mystic words were written upon them, mixed somewhat promiscuously with pictures of animals, a perfect Noah's ark of them, with vegetable productions in chromatic colours, apples and pears so green and red that they spelt "indigestion" to the most unlettered eye. There was a dunce in the corner with a peaked cap, mounted on the bad eminence of a desk, who was obviously and with much philosophy solacing himself for the sorrows of learning with a lump of toffee. You could see certain hydraulic machinery come into action whenever the glutinous mass stuck his teeth together. If that proved insufficient to clear the course, Master Dunce informally assisted things with his finger, which he first sucked and then wiped on his pinafore. A boy of a singularly thrifty turn was Master Dunce.

The historian can catalogue all these things at a safe

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distance. His purview is sane, dispassionate, and the reverse of young. John Glendonwyn however saw none of them. Instead, in the midst of an encompassing haze of round red cheeks, round childish eyes and infantine mouths as round with wonder as the letter O itself, he saw a slender girl with eyes of azure and hair golden-ripe coming forward to meet him. He did not even notice the pale blue ribbon, though he had a sense that it was there. Something so moist, so dewy, and appealing was in those eyes. So coral red glowed the mouth, the lips parted a little, perhaps (who can tell?) with the more quickly coming breath—perhaps with the heat of the schoolroom—which of course would also be the reason why her cheek had grown so delicately shell-pink, like the curl of the dog-rose ere it opens—that little secret dimple where the dew lies on clear mornings.

He was taking her hand. Yes—he was saying something. But strangely enough he could not hear what. The roll of drums was in his ears, the roaring of a mighty sea upon a rock-bound coast, near continuous thunderings of battle and strife—anything great and sonorous and deafening! Now he could see her lips moving. She was replying to him. Yet he heard not a word, or at least did not understand. He answered her back as in a dream. They were alone, as it were upon a great barren plain. The rounded bull's-eye orbs, the apple cheeks, the button mouths of the infant department faded utterly away. The schoolroom itself was not there. He had not dreamed in his college lodgings that she could be so fair. Yes, she was little. Granted, but who wants your great hulking women? Girls were not made to be judged like Clydesdales, were they? "*Daintily beautiful beyond words!*" He will maintain it anywhere. Blue eyes—rather a dark blue, that is your only colour. His own were like a china plate. Hair—was there ever

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anything like it—caught up and banded sweetly with palest blue (how well the shade of silk suited that rich golden floss!) Yes, it was beautiful—all the more so that little wisps and strays had escaped—nay, were continually escaping, requiring to be pursued, laid hands upon, scolded and put back. But all demurely, and, as has been said before, daintily.

Suddenly through the mist of fairyland there came something which waked up John Glendonwyn as efficiently as a bucket of ice water. Phonetically expressed, this was the interruption.

"Oh, dust yook at Teatzer! 'Im is holdin' Teatzer's hand!"

It was little Johnny Colstoun, who from his bad eminence of Dunce, and his privileged position as the Master's son (as well as the only boy who spoke English), could both observe and feel at liberty to declare the result of his observations. Johnny's claim to speak the English language in its purity may appear, from the specimen given above, to rest on insufficient grounds. Nevertheless his announcement was perfectly understood, not only by his Doric-speaking fellow-students, but also and more especially by "Teatzer" and "Im".

A ripple of laughter passed round the school, in which, happily and almost as childishly as any of them, "Teatzer" joined.

"Then I may come and see you to-night—after school, Fairlie?" John found his voice saying as he came to himself.

"You may come and see my father, sir."

The words appeared to be addressed to the polished tip of a pointer which Fairlie Glendinning was examining with the most absolute interest.

"Sir," said the young man, with as much indignation as he could express under his breath, "pray when did you forget that my name was John?"

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"I have not forgotten, Mr. Glendonwyn," said the girl smiling. She was now by far the more self-possessed of the two.

"*'Mister Glendonwyn' indeed!*" said John, striving hard to control his voice, for the myriad of little pitchers before him doubtless possessed both long ears and tongues of the brisk vigour of Johnny Colstoun's "that is worse than calling me 'sir'."

"You are going to be a minister, they say," continued the little school-mistress, "and it would be an unheard of thing to call a minister 'John'. I think there is a paragraph against it in the Confession of Faith. I would as soon think of calling Dr. Cæsar 'Gus'!"

"Fairlie," said John, in the same low tone, "to-night you will tell me why you are resolved to be so cruel to me. Everyone else is, but I had counted on you to be kind. Besides we are cousins—second cousins!"

"Well," said the girl, relenting a little, "you can come if you like, and we will see if we cannot show you a little cousinly sympathy—second-cousinly, that is!"

"Then you give me leave to come and see you, cousin?" said John, eagerly pressing his advantage.

"On the contrary, you may come and see my father—to be exact, your uncle—twice removed!"

"I shall be quite satisfied if he removes himself *once!*" muttered John Glendonwyn as he went out.

V

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BUT while John Glendonwyn was passing his last years at college, and returning home to be snubbed by his father, patronised by his brother, lectured by his fiancée, while he was growing interested in cousinships once or twice removed and golden Gretchen braids tied with pale blue ribbands, other things more world-wide in their significance were taking place in Scotland.

So in order that the characters of this history may be seen in their right grouping and relation, and that the reader may remark their motives and compulsions, some hint of these graver issues and deeper movements must be supplied in this place.

Yet because this is no chronicle of events national, no polemic, no special pleading cast into narrative form, but only the life-story of certain undistinguished folk at an eventful and stormy period of Scottish history, if any desire to learn further concerning these weightier matters of the law, to range arguments, to sift evidence, to weigh rights and wrongs, to adjudicate upon results—lo, the books are written. Let him go to them that sell and buy for himself!

A little sea-washed parish, a few lives writ mostly in water, half a score of green mounds ranged round the Kirk above Gower Water—that is all. "Tis Sixty Years Ago" indeed, and now the heads are snowy which once were variously raven-black and golden-brown. All the silver cordage is either loosed or

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loosening. The golden bowls are very nigh the breaking. The pitcher is taking its last journey to the fountain, and over those kirk-yard hillocks the blackbird among the minister's lilacs flutes a pensive song.

But to the matter in hand.

There is a certain law which holds good of Scotland only among the Kingdoms Three.

When, after too long fine weather in the body politic the atmosphere of that country grows close and electric, the storm which clears the air is always a religious one. England prefers to have at the King or whatever powers may be, with Cromwellian Roundheads and roundshot. Restorations, Revolutions, Reform Bills—these are her panaceas. Across St. George's Channel on similar occasions, green Erin has the pikes out of the thatch in a twinkling, and ho, for another bout with the Saxon. But such mere butcher's methods leave Caledonia cold. Even Mary of Guise could not make Scotland republican. Sixty years of Stuart Charleses and Jameses could not make her disloyal. But lay a finger on the Kirk, and lo, crook-backed David Leslie is at Newcastle or long Robert Hamilton making a push for it at the corner of Bothwell Brig.

The Reformation, the Persecution, and the Disruption—these are the true flood-marks of the Scottish spirit.

Not but what there has been a constant back-and-forth of conflict and controversy meantime! These storms are the longest in brewing, which break, most sharply. You have seen them. The horizon darkens almost imperceptibly to slaty indigo. The wind backs fitfully. The broken cloud-spume runs crossways overhead. Gusts of wind, alternately cold and hot, blow in from every quarter of the heavens. The trees sough and moan and creak after their kind. The rooks fly homeward. Cattle low at the milking gate, and

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human folk, far outgates, turn their faces hearthward. An uneasy, frightened silence broods over the fields. Oh, that it would come—better the rending and blasting of the elements than this insufferable, smothering suspense!

Then suddenly all the world stands black against you white electric levin. The thunder crashes overhead, falls back sullenly in peal upon peal, last of all rumbling and grumbling circumambulates the universe.

So with the most grave crises, and specially so with that mighty national rending, which is the background of the present history. No isolated phenomenon was this Disruption. Secessions greater and lesser, Relief and Marrow Controversies had heralded the final outbreak. But once over, the air was cleared indeed. Nor were the spoils only to the victors nor all the honey to those who had remained in the mother hive.

As after the Reformation the Scottish Catholics for the first time tasted the uses of adversity, as after the Revolution Settlement the Episcopalians learned to appreciate the learning and personal religion they had despised in Usher and their own Bishop Leighton—so after the dividing asunder of 1843 the residual Kirk of Scotland was quickened into new life by the rivalry of her own children.

Not enemies after all, were they—but bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh—with certain small differences about marriage settlements—just enough to afford pretext and reason for that eager emulation and debate which is the essence of happiness to the Scot.

Spite of unctuous present-day whimperings and political intriguings, it would be hard to conceive a worse day for Scotland, than when from Kirkmaiden to Cape Wrath and from Ardnamurchan to the East Neuk, no Dissenter was to be found. But of that—small fear, as all who know the breed, know.

For in what place soever under the threescore and

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ten palm trees of Elim, in any wilderness of Sin, beside Babylonian waters willow-fringed, there shall be gathered together three Scots, one of them will be no long time in showing himself a veritable Thomas, full of doubts and dissents. Such is the law of race. Yet even Thomas doubtless had his uses in the college of the apostles, to waken the too easy sleepers and to be a thorn in the sides of those inclined to take their ease in Zion.

Furthermore so soon as two of these expatriated Scots shall agree to set up an altar to their God, lo! the odds are as one to seventy-times-seven that the third, he of the Perfervid Stomach, shall at the word gather his skirts about him, enter dissent, table shilling, go out from among them, and forthwith proceed to set up an opposition altar over the way.

All which is in the scheme of things, eternal and irremediable, and if the nature of men be not changed with their vile bodies this quality of the Scot may serve to disrupt and disintegrate even the angelic choirs.*

In brief then, during the early years of the fifth decade of last century as during the concluding ones of the fourth, Scotland was in a turmoil of ecclesiastical debate, without precedent even in that dialectic land. And many were anxiously asking themselves whether the Kirk of God and the Martyrs was to be made subject in her jurisdiction spiritual, to the state which assured to her a part of her revenues. For so much money paid was she to lay down the arms of her warfare and accept patiently the orders of a generally

* A recent inheritor of these memoirs has queried on the margin whether even in Heaven a right-thinking dissenter might not think twice before allowing a Kirkman to share his hymnbook. But with such superfluous glosses the present unannotated edition of the Glendonwyn papers has nothing to do.

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ignorant and always unsympathetic English Government? Was the Court of Session or the General Assembly to hold spiritual sway in the land? How, in short, and by whom, was the Kirk of God, reformed and covenanted, to be governed? And had things come to such a pass that every minister, elder, congregation, Presbytery, Synod, and Assembly must take orders from a dozen Laodicean laymen at Whitehall or fifteen Sadducean lawyers seated in the Parliament House of Edinburgh?

From what has already been printed the general bias of the original writer of these memoirs (which seem to have been written about the year 1850, and repeatedly transcribed for different members of the Glendonwyn family) is obvious enough. The copy used by the present editor has a great many annotations and additions in the hand of one who "was no small part" of those things concerning which this history treats. These, where relevant, have been taken advantage of without special acknowledgment, by permission of the surviving representatives of the Glendonwyn family.

This original editor (who collected the greater part of the materials from which these chapters have been put together) belonged to neither party in the struggle, but as was natural, his sympathies seem to have been with the outgoing minority rather than with the majority which continued to hold the fort. As he is accustomed to say in his quaint diction, he "preferred Exodus to Numbers, but Genesis to either"—meaning to express by the last phrase, a proud preference for his own communion of the Cameronian Hill Folk, who had never entered the Kirk of King William's Revolution Settlement. One day in converse with a notable leader of the Disruption, the latter fell to praising (as well he might) the struggles and sufferings of the party of Secession.

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"With a great price, truly, obtained we this freedom!" cried the lately emancipated dignitary.

"But I was free born!" said our old Cameronian very quietly.

Furthermore it is abundantly clear from internal evidence that our original was from his youth up familiar with Wodrow and Patrick Walker, McWard, Renwick, and Shields. "Naphthali" is in his breast-pocket. The "Cloud of Witnesses" and "Howie's Scots Worthies" are his Sabbath feasts. He knows by heart the sacred places where the persecuted have in times past drawn themselves together in solemn sederunt, or stood in battle array.

He has meditated on the Elders' Stone under the shadow of the Spear of the Merrick. He loves to call the roll of "kenned places"—their very names sweet as music to the folk of the Lord—Quarrelwood, Loudon Hill, green-breasted Cairnsmore, the roaring linn of Crichope, Kirkconnel Muir where the martyrs lie head to the brae, with the red heather topping the low stone which Old Mortality last laid a chisel upon—and perhaps most of all, haunted Cairntable and Friarminion, whence at one view may be seen the Flowe of Drumclog and yonder cot-house of Priesthill, white upon that waste of brown peat-hags, where Isabel Weir, gathering up her goodman's brains decently in a napkin, "thought as muckle o' him now as ever!"

In writing over again for a newer generation these memorials of a time not long past, the present Editor has endeavoured to steer a middle course. Young folks' love talk, the gossip of herds and plough-lads, humorous incidents and characters straying across the stage, or cropping up in unexpected footnotes have been welded into one narrative. Scenes wide apart in the rambling chronicle or dispersed in separate journals have been made to follow each other (so far as

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may be), in a sort of dramatic sequence, and from these no deduction has been made.

But on the other hand much which is historically interesting, reports of sermons "painfully preached" but listened to without recorded weariness, extracts from innumerable pamphlets of the political and controversial sort, meditations, covenantings and personal memoranda generally, have been remorselessly excised.

Yet not wholly—for oftentimes the original text has a stroke of the ancient, quaint expression which is very taking, a pensive flavour as of an Isaac that loved to meditate in the fields at eventide and such things, at all hazard of apparent incongruity, have been retained.

VI

LITTLE JOHNNY KNOWS

A SHORT mile from the old bridge which steps with one stride over the Gower Water at the Brig End of the town of Kilgour stood a cottage,—the “Flower-cot” the people called it who passed that way on market days and knew no more of the owner and occupant than that he was one David Glendinning, a joiner by trade, and (what their eyes informed them) that he had goodly store of wood in his yard.

Boatcroft the house was called, from some former occupant who once on a day had ferried passengers over the yet unbridged Gower Water. Boat and boat-house, however, had long passed away, but the garden-croft kept its ancient greenness, and David Glendinning possessed it, a fellow of infinite conversation and a prettyish humour of the arid and sardonic kind—a religious enthusiast, too, whose creed was against every man’s, and who did not permit an entire forest of beams in his own eyes to stand in the way of minute knowledge of the motes in those belonging to his brethren.

Old David Glendinning possessed one great advantage in controversy. He had inherited a good, well-authenticated, working grievance. And, to do him justice David was not the man to bury his talent in the earth, but every hour and day he put it forth to usury, out of season and in.

Now there is no occupation, except perhaps that of a

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village smith, which gives so great scope for giff-gaff, badinage, mutual pleasantries—nay, even for the discussion of the more abstruse problems of morals and politics—as that of a country joiner. He goes off to perform this job or that at cottage or mansion. His workshop is just where he happens to drop his bag of tools. The laird himself strolls into the greenhouse and engages the radical man of chips-and-shavings upon the ill or well-doings of the present government. The minister, anxious as to the repairs of the vestry door, steps across from the manse at sight of David's paper cap—and lo—the sermon is at a standstill upon the clerical table, and passers-by on the village street hear with awe the din of clenched antagonisms, as the great words come rolling out—Freewill, Foreknowledge, Total Depravity, Covenants National and Solemn League, Paying of the Cess, Intrusion and Non-Intrusion, Prerogative and Right Divine. Or it is market Monday and the farmers' gigs are passing down the road like a procession, each within easy hail of the other. The flocks of sheep on their way to "Wallet's Mart" leave a lingering odour of the moorlands which you can smell half a mile behind them. Dogs circle and bark with cocked ears and eager eyes. Ash-plants fall briskly on the flanks of bullocks which, turning up some unkennd road-end, try by sheer dint of horn and weight of blundering beef to win a way back to their own well-remembered pastures.

For these and all such the joiner's "Flower-cot" by the roadside presented itself as an inevitable attraction. The stirk, with perhaps some undeveloped sense of beauty lurking in its dull bovine brain, tried to overleap the blue-painted palings in order to browse upon Kate Glendinning's Virginia Creeper. The farmer drew up with a long-drawn "*Woo-o-o*" to enquire about the progress of the new cart. A herd had a score of double feeding-troughs to put on order for his

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winter sheep. A farm-hand had brought grape or "claut" over his shoulder to get re-handled.

So it may be judged that Boatcroft was a bright place to dwell in, standing as it did near by the meeting of four great roads, the broad water of Gower swinging round in a noble curve just before the door, and the steeples and jail towers of Kilgour rising fairy-like on the opposite brae.

And David Glendinning was no less eagerly in demand because his daughters were fair to look upon, and his sons as bold lads as the country could show.

So it was no uncommon sight at the flower-sheltered porch of wood (the work of Fairlie Glendinning's eldest and favourite brother Will) to see of a forenight half-a-dozen young men all engaged in proving the constancy of male friendship by dropping in upon Master Will aforesaid, or upon Harry and Dick, his juniors—yet with eyes somewhat more apt to follow the swift, coquettish whiskings of Kate Glendinning's skirts as she passed to and fro, in and out—or it may be with ears erected to catch the rustling leaves of little Fairlie's books as she conned her lessons at the open window. The two girls indeed about equally divided the general admiration. Mostly the gayer wooers—bold young farmers riding their own horses, smart young veterinary surgeons, with fluent tongues and highly varnished gigs, lairds' sons bound to market for lack of anything else to do, toasted the elder, and even Fairlie's admirers agreed that Kate Glendinning deserved every bit of it. She was tall, handsome, independent, ready of speech, free-eyed and free-handed—a girl who looked her best when carrying two brimming pitchers of water (which she never did when there was anyone near to do it for her) or, as she oftentimes loved to stand, with her elbows on a five-barred gate, and a firm and rounded chin just a-dimple upon the back of her plaited fingers as she looked thoughtfully out into the sunset.

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Since the death of her mother six years before Kate had kept house for her father, and "The Auld Grey Wolf," as disappointed wooers were prone to call him when his inevitable tongue acted as kill-joy and spoilsport, knew the girl's value far too well to be very desirous of parting with her.

Little Fairlie's admirers, on the other hand, though they said less, were perhaps more numerous. Many, indeed most, sighed in secret, and though they may never have done more than walk beside the girl from the Brig End of Kilgour to her father's house on some winter's afternoon, they are apt to keep to their dying day a corner of their hearts for the purpose of enshrining therein the memory of little Fairlie Glendinning.

As for David's particular and inherited grievance you could not be long in his company without hearing him declare the beginning, middle, and end of that. He would be planing in the "joiner's shop," the floor littered ankle-deep in shavings, wheels, axe-handles, spoke-sheafs, and tools innumerable.

"Dinna sit doon on that bench, man!—Wull, the careless loon spilt the oil there when he was sharpin' the chisels this mornin'. Na, nor yet there amang thae shavings! There's a dozen eggs in a basket aneath them, that my lassie Kate is gaun to set below yon speckled hen—shoo, oot o' this, ye clockin' beast.

"Aye, and what news hae ye?—Does this auld gizened, rotten, wormeaten tub, the 'Kirk-an'-State' still manage to stick thegither? Ow aye—mony is the time in my lang life I hae seen the lawyers an' Doctors o' Diveenity patchin' at her—clootin' the auld duddy rags o' Patronage and Gospel-by-Act-o'-Parliament wi' peeti-fu' hippen-clouts caa'ed Kirk Extension an' Chapels o' Ease!

"As if the hale jing-bang, frae the college profes-

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sors to the young birkies that sit under them, had no been inhabitin' Chapels-o'-Ease a' the days o' their life. And the parish ministers!—Lord, there's Dr. Cæsar noo—mighty in word an' deed in the bit hole-and-corner meetin's they caa Church Coorts! He preaches sermons aff-loof like Boanerges himsel', they tell me. To shake hands wi' him is next thing to hob-nobbin' wi' King Solomon himsel' in a' his glory. He walks the streets o' Kilgour to the soond o' trumpets. The grund fair trembles aneath him. But tell me what it a' comes to, and I'll thank ye. Hae a' his words and gestures ever convertit ony man frae the error o' his ways? 'Be guid bairns,' that's the sum an' substance o' what he tells ye, 'for if ye dinna ye will maist likely injure your health—and forbye, think on the moral virtues and the ten commandments as exemplified by ME' an' the lave o' the Presbytery!

"Oh, I'm no sayin' a word again him! The Doctor is the best o' a bad batch. I am tellin' ye! No that the ither side are wan whit better. As to your Chalmerses and Candlishes and Kinnigums, I am no sayin'—I ken nocht aboot them. They may be trumpets o' the grace o' God, or mere soondin' brass and tinklin' cymbals. But for the kind o' folk they send hereaway to raise the Auld Blue Banner in the wund, I hae nae goo o' them. They are juist weak fushionless craitors, their mouths filled wi' great swellin' words, as sayeth Jude the brother o' James—no yin o' them that I ever set e'en on, that can stand up to me upon the History and Obligations o' the Covenants. I wadna gie yae guid tove wi' auld Anton MacMillan aff the hill-side o' Bennangour there for a' the bletherin' lot—

"Na, I am nae Cameronian, neither. I hae tried them. And I hae nae goo o' them, either. Biggit up in their ain conceit, that's them. For ever hatchin' oot eggs that hae been hard-clookit this twa hunder year and mair. Na, nor yet New Licht nor Auld Licht, nor

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Licht United. I tell ye, I, David Glendinning, am, in my ain proper person the verra Kirk o' Scotland itsel'! I am but a humble man. I claim nae mair and wull be satisfied wi' nae less.

"For I stand by John Knox himsel'—a' that cam' after him hae dune nocht but spoil his graund and perfit wark. Through a' Scotland there's never a man faithfu' but mysel'. That there's no a woman, gangs withoot saying. For what should the puir silly craiturs ken aboot maitters? Na, they are ower high for them!

"The bits o' bairns? In spiritual things they are but feeble—yon lasses o' mine, Kate and Fairlie—I sair misdoot—gi'en ower to pomps and vainities, and the callants just like ither callants! They frequent kirks and meetin'-hooses, and indeed I hae never tried to stop them! Little they ken or care o' the strivin' o' the Speerit. Na, na, let them gang—let them gang! If it be the wull o' the Lord that in time they should be enlighthened like their faither, I wull never refuse to them the pure word o' instruction that abides alone wi' me.

"But in the mean time, let them gang to the Doctor and be goldered at, to Maister Aiblins an' be bleated at, to Maister Kirkstane and be blattered at (the puir craitur has but three sermons, ye ken),—or if they want an especial treat, let them wait till that helicat laddie, John Glendonwyn, is ready to tak' possession o' the manse and wag his head in that dooble-eyed Erastian pulpit o' the pairish o' Gower.

"I speak bitterly, ye say, and hae I no guid reason? Come to my front door. There, ower the treetaps on yon bonny brae-face looking doon on the white sails on the Solway saut-water, ye can see the towers o' Castle Gower. Ye ken the race that dwalls there?

"The Glendonwyn, say ye! Richt ye are! And ye maybes ken my name? Glendinnin'!—Sae it is! Weel, in this press there's an auld family Bible—a' that

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my grandfather Gregory, peace to his lang crumbled banes, brocht away frae yon prood castle—the hame in whilk he was born—aye, and his fathers afore him, for a dozen generations.

“Oh, it’s a weel-kenned thing in a’ the countryside. Gregory Glendonwyn was his name, even as it is that o’ the auld reprobate wha dwells yonder at this day and hour. He cam’ forth in anger, did my grandfather—forth frae the hoose that micht hae been his ain. ‘I will work wi’ my hands for wife and bairns,’ says he, confirming the same wi’ an oath as was his habit, ‘but I will no longer bear my faither’s name nor touch a penny that hath been his!’ So said he and so he did. He bred his son, my faither, to be a joiner—himself, being without a settled trade, takin’ naturally to the school-mastering. And sae here in the face of the mighty, stand I, Davvid Glendinning, owing nae man a farthin’ and never behadden to ony Glendonwyn, great or sma’, for as muckle as a soda-scone, or a drink o’ caller water!”

And it was a true word that Old Grey Wolf spake. Deny it could none. All that could be said against it was, that he repeated it somewhat too frequently.

* * * * *

On the day of his visit to the school, John Glendonwyn took lunch with the Rector and his wife in the two-storied, white-washed house adjoining the little Academy, over whose porch the roses clambered in summer, and in front of which the naked poplars now shivered in the cold northern wind. Mrs. Colstoun was a handsome woman of forty-five, to appearance a little tired and listless, but when once known full of the sweetest and tenderest humours. Her eye, naturally motherly, lighted with pleasure kind and compassionate upon the lad. “As good as orphaned,” she

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called him to Mr. Colstoun. "If I were left alone with that curmudgeon of a father, I declare I would shoot either myself or him!" she would declare in her brisk sudden way. Mrs. Henry Colstoun always made swoops into conversation, monopolised it for a minute, and then, dropping out, lapsed into a sympathetic silence.

The children were in their places at table, from Grace the pretty eldest girl, to Johnny, the late heroic Dunce of the infant schoolroom, who sat regarding John Glendonwyn with great round eyes. Between these extremes a raft of boys and girls of assorted sizes bickered and squabbled, so far at least as their legs and hands were concerned, though the parts of their persons which appeared above the horizon line of the tablecloth remained mute and serious of aspect as if they had been so many Hindoo gods.

"You are to be in this part of the world for some time, are you not, Mr. Glendonwyn?" the lady of the house inquired graciously, shooting a glance at him out of her dark unfathomable eyes.

"Till about the middle of the month," said John, mildly unsuspecting.

"John is coming to give me a hand in the school with the upper classical fellows, while I dress up the lower forms before the Presbyterial Examination," said her husband, "that young Martin Fraser does his best, but it might be just humanly possible to construct a thing of springs and clockwork which would be of as much real use!"

"It is most kind of you to help my husband in your holidays," said Mrs. Colstoun reaching out her hand to John, a hand which had done him many a kindness in the days when his father had sent him to board with the Rector's family in order that the castle might be freed of his presence. "You give up a great

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deal just to stand in a stuffy school-room and drill Latin rudiments into dull cubs like those of ours. I don't know why you do it!"

Like an arrow little Johnny's hand shot out, the fore-finger and thumb cracking merrily as if in class.

"*I know—please muzzer, Little Dzonny knows!*" cried the professor of the English language in his most rapid utterance.

"Why, because Mr. Glendonwyn loves father, Johnny,—and because he is kind, of course!" said his mother.

But Johnny had later information. He would have none of such milk-and-water explanations.

"No, 'tisin't one bit!" he almost shrieked the words, so afraid was he of being stopped, "*'tis betause 'im likes to hold Teatzer's hand!*"

A gurgling explosion ran along the double line of Johnny's brothers and sisters. Master Ralph Colstoun snorted a mouthful of his soup after the manner of a garden-hose over a considerable area, recovered himself before any eye of authority could detect him, and glared reproachfully at his sister May, who (being wholly innocent), of course instantly appeared to be overcome with shame and guilt.

"Johnny, leave the room!"

It was the stern voice of his father, who seldom spoke at table to his younger children. There was no gainsaying that command throughout all the corners of the house of Colstoun.

"*Boo—hoo—hoo!*" went Johnny, roaring rather than crying all the way to the door, and stuffing his pinafore into his mouth to moderate the vehemence which even he felt to be unseemly at dinner-time and in the presence of a guest. But being arrived at the portal of the dining-room he wrestled a while unsuccessfully with the door-handle, which his flooding tears prevented him from seeing clearly. Having at last

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secured a line of retreat he turned to fire his Parthian shaft, the great salt drops raining from his chin, his cheeks, even from his little red, tip-tilted nose.

"But it's true—ast' him! Lil Dzonny was Duncce, an' seed 'im! And Teatzter, she let him. Yah! Don't want no dinner, Dzonny doesn't! *Hoo-hoo-ahoo!*"

And having left this pretty speech for the assembled company to digest along with their dinner, Johnny fled to his most secret hiding place to sob out his woes in solitude.

There was silence for a moment which to John Glendonwyn seemed a period only to be computed by centuries. The children, appalled by the wholesale iniquity of Johnny, ceased their merely retail scufflings and kickings. They exchanged meaning glances, however. *They* knew all about it. Did not each boy of them know to a day when Fairlie Glendinning put on a new ribbon? Were not the girls injured, if every man whose shadow so much as fell on the outer wall of the infant department, did not instantly declare himself on his knees to be in love with her? Fairlie was their fairy princess and as good as she was beautiful.

But relief was at hand. The heavy guns came into action in the nick of time.

"What is thought in Edinburgh of the new deputation which the Non-Intrusion Party are sending to London?" asked Henry Colstoun, gravely, with that air of cultural aloofness which he could assume at will as part of his professional outfit.

"Really I had not heard of it," stammered John, a little ruefully, it must be admitted, "but what does it matter? These fellows are always trying some dodge of the kind. It will all come to nothing!"

"I wish I could think so," said the Rector. "In my opinion the whole matter is of the very gravest significance. Scotland is deeply moved—far more deeply

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than I have ever seen it in my time. I should not be surprised if the Kirk of Scotland were to be divided in two as with a sharp sword."

"Oh," cried John, reviving at the words, "they talk—and talk, these firebrands and high-fliers. But they will not risk a penny-worth of stipend to make good their words. So soon as Government really closes its hand, you will see that they will close their mouths!"

"I differ from you, John," said the Rector, quietly. "In my opinion not only will by far the greater part of those who profess and expound the Evangelical position cleave to their leaders, but when it secedes, that party will leave very few men of genius or even high ability within the State Church."

"You do not mean to say," cried John, in astonishment, "that you of all men favour the opinions of ministers who set themselves in open contempt of the law of the land?"

"That is only a way of speaking convenient to their opponents," said the Rector, "these men are obeying a law which is higher than the law of any land—they follow what they believe to be the law of God."

"And you agree with them," said John, looking at him in a half-frightened manner, "surely that might have very grievous consequences if your opinion should become known."

The strong face of the Rector unconsciously firmed itself. His dark eyes took in one by one his little flock and the mother so quietly at the table-foot.

"I do not make any secret of my opinions," he went on. "Neither do I obtrude them. I am a servant, not a bond-slave; and if a sacrifice be demanded of me, I hope that I may have the courage to face it as well as another man. That such a sacrifice will be demanded of many, and that at no distant date, I am well

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assured. And you, John—I suppose you have made up your mind over which sea you are to sail your barque?”

“Oh, I shall dock my poor tub in the old port, I suppose,” said John, heartily glad to have got off the unfortunate subject started so suddenly by Johnny. “Indeed I could not face my father on any other hypothesis. But really I have thought little about the matter one way or the other. I always supposed that the high-fliers were nothing but self-advertising humbugs and ranters. That has always been taken for granted among the men with whom I mostly associate. A man takes these things on trust, as one is born Whig or Tory. I happened to have been born Tory, that is all!”

“It is a good religion to be born of, even now,” said Mr. Colstoun, with an air of philosophic consideration, “that is, when the estate goes with it. For a second son—I am not so sure!”

“Well in this case there is the family living for him!” suggested John smiling.

“Ah,” said his friend, shaking his head, “if only I could see you thinking for yourself, and—well, taking things a little more seriously.”

“That is just what Veronica Cæsar says, sir,” cried John before he thought, and at the words the Rector’s wife looked up with a quaintly quizzical expression on her face.

“Perhaps the Doctor’s little Johnny has revelations to make at table too?” she suggested softly, “these little habits of hand-holding are apt to grow on a young man—I have noticed.”

“No, madam,” said John, with the great calmness which he could always command when speaking of his nominal *fiancée*. “Veronica and I are such good friends that there is only one thing in the world about which we agree.”

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"I am interested—tell me!" said his hostess, her eyes brightening.

"That is, that neither one of us shall ever be persuaded to marry the other."

"But the long-standing engagement?" suggested the Rector's wife, who had her own reasons for being curious in the matter.

"Our several parents are responsible for that. It is an affair for them," said John, "for our part Vera and I are unanimously of the contrary opinion."

"Ah! I wonder," murmured Mrs. Henry Colstoun, meditatively.

But within her heart she was thinking swiftly.

"If he had not told me that, not a foot should he have set within the academy door—no, not if I had to pay an extra assistant's wages out of my house-money. I am not going to have my little Fairlie's heart troubled by young men of promiscuous affections. And in any case I shall keep my eyes on this Master John. I remember a certain young man once on a time who was very fond of doing secretarial work for my father. That was all right, as it proved, but then every man is not like—like my Henry."

For it was part of the charm of Fairlie Glendinning that all good women felt an instantaneous desire to "mother" and protect her, ruffling maternal feathers and drooping angry wings at the mere shadow of any hawk masculine. And the Rector's wife, though already generously provided for in the matter of brood, had yet room for little Fairlie to nestle in at her side among the rest.

At the close of this simple feast, John and the Rector sat a while talking. The young man was always at his best in his old dominie's company. The firm, gentle, conscientious "rightness" of the master's every word and action, were for the time being reflected in the pupil. Presently, however, Mr. Colstoun announced

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that he must betake himself off back to school, and John said he would stay and say good-bye to the Rector's wife, with whom, spite of sundry threatenings with beak and claw on the score of Fairlie, he was a prime favourite.

A slight noise at the door attracted the young man's attention, as he sat looking idly out at the playground and watching the hurrying spate of boys who chased each other like leaves down a river in the autumn floods, tumbling in shrieking heaps on the slide, limping aside, and returning in frantic haste to the work of keeping the pot boiling.

From the outer dark of the passage a tear-stained face peeped for a moment within the dining-room. John recognised his tormentor. It was Johnny—a penitent Johnny—a hungry Johnny. For the orders, of the master of the house had been strict, and—Johnny had not succeeded in seeing his mother.

"I sowwy,"—said Johnny, whose pronunciation of the letter R was that of the late Lord Dundreary. "Vewwy! Is *all* 'ee fings tleared away?"

"I am afraid so," said John, smiling. Then he added, "See here, you little rascal, why did you tell such a story about—about your teacher?"

"Twasn't stowwy nuther—*there!*" said Johnny stoutly, sticking to his guns.

"Look here," said John, "Teatzter wouldn't like it if you ever said a thing like that again. You won't, will you? Because *I* ask you?"

Johnny pretended not to understand, falling back instead on actualities upon which he felt himself more competent to converse.

"I'se vewwy, *vewwy* hundry," he said, patting his blouse to show how slack it was at the part chiefly affected by hunger or repletion.

"Then you won't say it again, will you, Johnny? And I'll ask father to forgive you!"

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Johnny looked out of the window with an air of great detachment and disinterestedness, polishing meanwhile the toe of one boot with the sole of the other in a circular manner.

"Zere's an offul nice pastwycook dzust at ze corner yonder—Miss Parton is her name. She has tarts an' dzam rolls—and oo"—here he sunk his voice to a luscious and even glutinous whisper "*minth pies!*"

John's right hand executed a flank movement towards his pocket, returned unobtrusively, and passed something over to a set of remarkably dirty and tear-furrowed fingers, which closed over the mysterious gift like so many claws.

"Fank 'oo!" said Johnny. "Never will tell no more when I sees you——"

• "Get out, you young ruffian!" cried John, hearing the returning footsteps of his hostess in the passage.

And John Glendonwyn, looking out of the window, saw the broadest part of a pair of checked knickerbockers and a very much bent back "scoot" along the playground wall, dodge through and disappear in the direction of *dzam-rolls*, and "*tarts*," and the—"Oo, *minth-pies*" which render famous for ever the confectionery magazine of Miss Emily Parton.

VII

CONSPIRATORS

IN order to pass away the afternoon till such time as little Mistress Fairlie should be released from school, John Glendonwyn betook himself to solitary meditation upon the wooded shores of the Witch's Loch, a broad and island-studded sheet of water less than a mile from the town of Kilgour, but on the opposite side of the river from David Glendinning's Flower-cot and his own paternal towers of Castle Gower.

The afternoon was clear and sunshiny—the snow lying slightly dusted among the pine trees on the higher slopes, but crisping pleasantly under foot as he rounded the curves of that Lover's Walk where so many in his condition have sought, so few found, a lasting solace.

John had no anxiety about his father, and he knew that his father would have none about him. So long indeed as he kept decently out of Mr. Glendonwyn's sight, and the old man could learn from Grierson that his younger son was in no superlative mischief, no questions were asked at Castle Gower as to his outgoings or incomings. Besides which John always stood well with the servants, who were generally indignant at the neglect and partiality of his father. At present, indeed, his popularity was somewhat eclipsed by that of his brilliant brother, who, with his pockets once more refilled by a father who had (to all appearance) regained his complacency, was proving himself as

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largely and dashinglly generous to all who came in his way as returned and forgiven prodigals usually are.

So John Glendonwyn turned down the Lover's Walk, fully assured that old Duncan Grierson would peril his immortal soul and even forfeit some part of his worldly perquisites, rather than utter a word which might prejudice him to his father.

As to his brother, John did not know by what methods he had rehabilitated himself with his father, but apparently the reconciliation had been effected and was complete. For during every forenoon and often during the evenings also, Rupert Glendonwyn and his father could be seen pacing the terrace together, deep in confidential converse. If John happened to pass them, Rupert nodded pleasantly. His father's face never altered a muscle. He would have taken more notice of a rabbit.

The Laird of Castle Gower was more than ever wrapped up in his eldest son—so much so that when the young man, wearying of the dulness of the old house and the stagnation of Kilgour, got ready to ride over to Drumfern (where a regiment of cavalry was quartered at the time) his father ordered out his own sedate grey cob and announced his intention of riding with him. On this occasion Rupert proved a very silent and even sulky companion. His recently acquired money had been burning a hole in his pocket, and in addition to other delights he desired to tempt once more the delicious uncertainties of faro and vingt-et-un.

But beyond a decorous visit to the commanding officer (who thought the distinguished magistrate and his son great bores) the pair did nothing save dine in most indifferent state at the Cross Keys and ride home together, Gregory Glendonwyn being more cheerful of countenance than he had been for years. As for Rupert, he cast desperately about in his mind for any

pretext by which he might escape from the intolerable dullness and increasing surveillance of Castle Gower.

Lying awake at nights, he could hear hushed footsteps moving to and fro outside his bed-room, and once his father entered his chamber after midnight with a deed in his hand which he professed himself unable to read.

"The old fox," growled Rupert to the brother in whom for some inscrutable reason he had begun to confide, "does he think I don't see that he only wanted to find out if I were larking on the sly?"

* * * * *

So John Glendonwyn, pacing by the wan gleam of the witch's water, and looking across at the purple woodlands opposite swimming in the silver haze of an early winter sunset, carried not the least atom of jealousy in his bosom. Like a scarlet pomegranate flower set in the dead bosom of a nun's robe, the love of little Fairlie Glendinning kindled and warmed the grey monotone of the young man's life.

He thought of the girl, working cheerfully and gratefully at her tasks in the crowded school-room, and he said "Thank God, I can give her something better than that, at any rate!"

Ah, but will she take your gift, think you, Master John Glendonwyn—too confident hero? For neither you nor any on the earth can yet know the Titan's heart which this same shy little Fairlie carries with such demure grace beneath the black gown as she trips back and forth to her work at Kilgour Academy.

But through the tingling warmth of such thoughts as these of Fairlie, there would intrude most unwelcomely the rebukes of Veronica Cæsar, and in addition certain obstinate questionings provoked by the lad's interview with his old head-master.

Was it true that after all the ministry was not a

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profession but a vocation? Ought those who were knowingly unfitted for it, never to enter it—and those who might discover their unworthiness, to leave it as soon as they did so? What a disruption that would make in all the churches! John had done his work in the theological classes as faithfully as he could, but he had seen no need to study his Bible or consider whether he had anything to teach men when he should be placed in spiritual authority over them.

That fatal Scottish familiarity with the Bible as a lesson-book which John Glendonwyn had acquired at school, prevented him from ever opening it after he left. Young men do not read their old school books.

Still the heart of the youth was clean, willing, teachable, and the time of hardening was not yet. He respected his Rector as he respected no other man. Again and again recurred the thought of Mr. Colstoun's prophesy that a time of cleaving and trying would surely come, and that right early. How would he, John Glendonwyn, stand in that day?

And through the growing dusk of the winter's eve he saw the clear, deep-piercing eyes of Veronica Cæsar searching into his soul. They seemed to make him wince. John drew a long breath, looked at his watch, and turned back towards the town. The thought of little Fairlie, alone, drawing together the threads of her day's work, was like the glowing of a household hearth to the lonely boy. He felt instinctively that *she* would never trouble him with questionings about creeds and catechisms, nor drive him at the bayonet's point to duties and life-missions.

On the other hand such a face as hers would be a man's day-star, his house angel. What he thought, she would think. What he did, she would hold right. Foolish John! A rounded cheek, a dimpled chin, two pouting lips, and a pair of trusting blue eyes—why should they write down the immortal spirit behind

them as easy, docile, obedient, the compound of those ancient qualities which the uninstructed male desires (and expects) in the woman he loves.

But the young man did not know these things, and in vision beheld the way stretched out easy and plain before him. Spite of the most weather-beaten of proverbs, he yet expected the course of *his* true love to run smooth, even as the prospects of his life were set down on legal parchment and assured to him by the statute book of the realm. The reversion of the parish of Gower so soon as he should qualify for the ministry of the Kirk of Scotland, his mother's little fortune to add to the large parochial stipend from the day of his ordination. All was ready to his need. His father had set his hand to the necessary instruments while he was yet a child. He could not indeed gratify his parent by marrying Vera Cæsar, for the most excellent of all reasons. Vera Cæsar would not marry him. Therefore this most logical young man held himself free to choose and to love whomso he would. He had done both and now he was on his way to the bridge-end by which little Fairlie Glendinning, his heart's chosen, must pass on her way home.

John knew the routine of the Academy so well that he could judge to a minute or two when he might expect to hear the first waft of the children's evening hymn, with which Fairlie brought the proceedings of the day to a close. And so, when the familiar words of the 23rd Psalm in the Scottish version came clear on the evening air to the dying fall of New St. Ann's, and as the infant voices thinned out at the end of each line, till finally the voice of Fairlie could be heard singing almost alone, John Glendonwyn felt a pang strike him to the heart. He thought it was religion, and was cheered that the mere sound of little children singing a psalm had power to move him so deeply.

He thought, as he stood there waiting in the deep

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hush of sunset, that he might yet attain for himself those things of which he had only vaguely heard—the call to duty, the life-devotion, the singleness of eye and the rest. But in another moment it struck him that his feeling would depend chiefly on whether he could listen from his pulpit to that voice of Fairlie Glendinning—"clear in the closing psalm." Without that, he acknowledged that all would be but "as the burden of the desert of the sea, the crying of a land terrible and very solitary."

John stood looking down from the Bridge End of Kilgour, the long street with its whitewashed cottages dwindling gradually into a greyish infinity through the early falling twilight. Pearly mists crept out over the river, and the old square tower of Tondergarth stood up purple-black from its island-ridge.

Yes, the infant department was coming out at last—all important event. First there was a shrill cackle of voices preluding the trampling of little iron-shod country clogs and the sedater boots of the burgher bairns. Urchins fell over each other trying to slide along the gutters or to negotiate the patches of salted pavement. Little girls came along hand in hand, singing as they came the words of their even-song.

*The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want!
He makes me down to lie.
In pastures green, he leadeth me
The quiet waters by.*

The multitude of young vivid lives scattered this way and that. They had been and so far as the outdoor life was concerned, were not. Various doors gleamed for a moment as the firelighted homes took them in. The street grew bare again, bleaker than before, snow-chill, wintry. It would be a full hour before the Seniors were out. For that—"Praise the

Lord!" quoth John Glendonwyn. He was assuredly growing devout. So much so that the matter struck himself with astonishment.

The long dull street began to glimmer at its further end. Yonder was Davie McGeorge, the lamplighter, running with an old-fashioned fusee carried over his shoulder along with his ladder. Up and down he went regularly, running from one lamp to the other to keep himself warm. There were at least three in the long quarter mile of street. They did not waste the "off-spring of heaven first-born" in the town of Kilgour. The frost-haze began to make a little iridescent halo about each dim oil lamp, a fact which John Glendonwyn had only time to observe, when suddenly all his ideas and observings flew this way and that—as utterly routed as if a shell had exploded in an ant's nest. So fast into infinite dispersion fled these wise thoughts, these accurate memoranda-makings at the mere appearance of a certain slender, little, black figure on the scarce tarnished whiteness of the snow.

But the next moment John was stamping his foot. Confusion—ten hundred million confusions! There were *two* black dots. Could it be—but no! Surely not! If it were, he would wring Martin Fraser's neck for him. But as the dots enlarged, one proved to be very little indeed—far too small for Martin, who was growing at the (apparent) rate of about a foot in the week. At least his mother thought so as she observed with sadness the boy's trousers crawling farther and farther from his ankles and realised that now she dared no longer mend a full-fledged pupil teacher's pantaloons with scraps of his father's old moleskins.

Nevertheless John Glendonwyn turned away and walked down the incline from the bridge. He would go on and rejoin Fairlie at her own door. But his walk was spoiled, and the evening was spoiled also. He knew by his own schoolboy experiences what the

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Flower-cot had been even in the days when Kate was its sole attraction. But now—with Fairlie also!—He would go straight back to Castle Gower, lock himself in his room and read up Ecclesiastical History together with Councils of the Church—these being the most repellent subjects of which he could think at short notice.

Then having come to this resolution a new thought struck him. Perhaps she was only seeing one of her pupils home. She might have a word of kindness or of warning to bestow on the child's mother. Of course—what a fool he had been!

He turned back. There they were—two of them!

“How do you do, Fairlie?”

“Dear me, Mr. Glendonwyn—who would have thought——”

“*And Dzonny have tummed to stay all—ee—night wif Teatzer. Isn't 'oo glad? I is, offul! Will 'oo have some toffee? All mine tarts is done.*”

Needless to add the interruption was in the voice of Master Johnny Colstoun, and it seemed to his benefactor that he winked up at him as he turned the sweet-meat glutinously over in his mouth. Indeed the whole atmosphere appeared to be impregnated with the odour of brandy-ball. It tainted the young moonlight and made the stars of heaven burn dim.

To John Glendonwyn, for the moment Herod the Great seemed an unjustly maligned monarch. And if he had only added the name of Johnny Colstoun to the list of missing in the little affair at Bethlehem, John felt that he might have been forgiven much.

But so strange are the inconsistencies of girls that Fairlie seemed in infinitely higher spirits now than when he had seen her before. Never, indeed, had John beheld her so kind and gay. Her blue eyes sought his with the utmost frankness, or at least did not appear to avoid them. Instead of the demure maiden of the

schoolroom, the young man found that he had to do with a romp and a madcap—in so far, that is, as the young lady's ongoings with Master Johnny Colstoun were concerned.

The two ran races far ahead, Johnny receiving ten yards' law, being overtaken, caught up shrieking and swung high in the air. And as for holding hands—a matter upon which the young gentleman had shown himself so ruthlessly observant, he invariably clutched at "Teatzer's" hand as soon as each race was over.

John Glendonwyn walked quietly behind, carrying the books of the elder romp with as much Christian charity and submission as the occasion permitted. When the roysterers stopped, panting, breathless and unashamed to wait for the laggard, John took credit for his perspicacity in placing himself on the side further from his tormentor. But if this were his object, he was singularly unsuccessful. For so soon as Johnny Colstoun observed the manoeuvre, he promptly cast loose the hand to which he had attached himself, and running round insinuated himself between John Glendonwyn and "Teatzer" with the gentle courtesy of a locomotive clearing the track.

At this point John's thoughts became prayers to certain inferior divinities to undertake the fate of Master Johnny Colstoun, and that immediately. That youth, however, was quite unmoved.

"I wish you would go to the other side," suggested John Glendonwyn presently, with some acridity, "I do not like the smell of brandy-ball."

"Well—Teatzer does. She's suckin' one now!" replied the youth triumphantly. And instead of blushing, the graceless Fairlie admitted the fact and even attempted to justify the act on the score of good taste.

"I don't think I shall ever grow up really," she owned, "I am just as fond of sweets as ever I was, and do you know, my little sweetheart here has been

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giving me quite a lot. I'm afraid he has been spending all his money upon them!"

John had been resolving to buy out the entire stock-in-trade held by the "sweetie" shops of Kilgour, but Fairlie's reference to the source of the brandy-balls checked him. As well as he could for the growing darkness, he eyed Johnny with fixed sternness. Had the young Turk betrayed him? Did Fairlie know of the dark, financial compact of the Rector's dining-room?

No, he was sure from a quaint contraction of the enterprising infant's nearer cheek that he intended to assure his fellow-conspirator that there is such a thing as honour among thieves. But suddenly there came upon them a quite different interruption.

A horseman rode up rapidly out of the darkness of the wood at the further end of which Boatcroft was situated. John had not been thinking of or observing anything out of the immediate circle, which (so far as his eyes were concerned) was lighted by the golden braid and the pale blue ribbons.

Suddenly he heard his name called aloud in a man's voice:

"So this is where you are, you rogue!"

It was his brother who was speaking, and John's heart leaped jealously for the first time in his life.

"Who is your friend—oh I beg your pardon!" Rupert broke off at sight of Fairlie, "I did not see you had a lady with you. Will you introduce me?"

The horseman had leaped from his saddle, and stood before them with his hat in his hand, bowing gracefully, before John could utter a word.

Rupert Glendonwyn might have been called a beautiful young man, with something of the air and profile of one of the old French masters of fence, Bussy d'Amboise or D'Artagnan, perhaps—a low brow, a curved sensitive nose, a long black moustache and a

rather full and prominent chin. His black hair being cast back from a low brow gave him a somewhat reckless look, which was not belied by the white splash of a bullet mark on the cheek which he had obtained in a duel in Algeria. But Rupert's eyes could be soft and caressing in expression, and they were so now. At his brother indeed he scarcely looked. His eyes were all for little Fairlie who, her gaiety suddenly subdued, stood motionless, clutching Johnny Colstoun's hand as if he alone could protect her.

"Introduce me, John!" He had to repeat his request before John recalled his wits.

"Miss Fairlie, this is my brother, Rupert!"

More than that he could not bring himself to do. But his brother was at no loss. "I am fortunate indeed," he said readily, "I have been looking in vain for my brother all day, Miss Fairlie. Nobody at Castle Gower had seen him or knew what had become of him. And as some men were coming over from Drumfern to stay a day or two with me—I wanted him to be there to help me entertain them!"

By this time Fairlie had quite recovered her composure.

"I met Mr. Glendonwyn at the bridge, as my little friend Johnny and I were going home together," she said, calmly. "He was good enough to carry my books for me."

"Then Miss Fairlie is still taking lessons in Kilgour—I had no idea there were such good teachers in the neighbourhood," said Rupert who had at once monopolised the conversation and usurped John's place beside Fairlie Glendinning. The younger stalked along in gloomy silence.

"Oh, I am not taking but giving lessons," said the girl quickly, "and my name is not Miss Fairlie, but Fairlie Glendinning."

"Then you can certainly give my brother a lesson in

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the art of making introductions," said Rupert with a bow.

"Pah," thought John contemptuously, "he addresses a girl like Fairlie as if she were a Frenchwoman who needed all the time to be paid compliments to!"

"Now that I have found the truant," continued Rupert, "may I turn and walk back with you both—that is as far as John was going to accompany you?"

And without waiting for permission, he threw the reins of his horse over his arm and walked on by Fairlie's side.

The girl was occupied in thinking how she would muster up courage to prevent him coming to Boatcroft, lest he should meet her father. For though from long association and a certain liking for the lonely boy, David Glendinning had grown accustomed to seeing John about the place, the proud Old Grey Wolf cherished a deep-rooted antipathy to the whole race of the Glendonwyns. And Fairlie, in whose thoughts gentleness and peace kissed each other mutually and continually, did not at all know how her father might take the sudden introduction to his house of the heir of Castle Gower.

It was at this moment that Master Johnny Colstoun, at first infinitely impressed by the dashing cavalier, created a diversion. Like any other lover Johnny resented it bitterly when anybody monopolised his beloved "Teatzer's" attention. So he set up a sudden howl of despair which made Rupert's spirited horse dance a little, till his master quieted him with a pat or two on the glossy arch of his neck.

"Ooo—ooo—ooh!" he cried, "I'se dwopped *all* of my bwandy-balls. 'Iss, ewevy one! Johnny shan't go on—no, he shan't! Somebody go find em!"

And promptly suiting the deed to the word, he squatted down on the snow and proceeded to howl most lustily.

"What does he want? Whoa there, Bravo! Steady boy—so—o—o!"

"He says he has dropped his sweets on the road," translated Fairlie out of the vernacular.

"Who is the little grubby beast anyway?" growled Rupert in a low tone to his brother, as Fairlie bent down and tried by kisses and promises to comfort her charge.

"The son of the Rector of the Academy," said John briefly.

"Me will go back mineself—wants to go back now!" howled Johnny the Obstinate, "shan't go wif you if oo' won't find me my bwandy-balls!"

"Oh for heaven's sake go get the little wretch his sweets," said Rupert whose horse was not used to such infantile displays of vigour,—“they can't be far back. He'll drive Bravo wild in a minute with his yelling! It's worse than a steam-engine!"

Fairlie looked up quickly, but it was too dark to see the expression in her eyes. Whereat John, nervously sensitive, took her silence for acquiescence in Rupert's request, lifted his hat, turned silently on his heel, and strode savagely back towards Kilgour bridge with his eyes on the ground, anathematising (in their order) dirty little boys as a class, Little Johnny in particular, his brother and his French manners, and lastly his own awkward, clumsy, unready self.

It would not have added to the cheerfulness of his meditations had he known that a few moments after he had completely passed out of ear-shot, the first mentioned young gentleman burst out afresh.

"Oo, I say, Teatzer—I'se finded ze bwandy-balls in ze pocket of mine dzacket—dzust where I putted zem at first! How funny!"

"Oh, you bad little boy," cried Fairlie, shaking him, and then turning to Rupert, she added, "you must

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ride back quickly and call John—I mean Mr. Glendonwyn.”

And at this point the girl stammered and stopped.

“My horse is tired and I fear a little lame,” said Rupert, easily. “John will be back in a moment, Miss Fairlie. It is only a step to the town. I daresay he is buying a few more—what did he call the things?—oh, ‘brandy-balls’ for the young gentleman there. Besides I really could not leave you alone on such a night. You must permit me the honour of escorting you home.”

* * * * *

“*Can Little Dzonny ride on your horse?*”

“Little Dzonny can!” said Rupert promptly, adding under his breath, “Little beasts are of use sometimes. They clear the coast. I hope the brat won’t break his neck, though, before we get him safely to the door—that’s all!”

So a very happy Johnny with the recovered brandy-balls in his pocket, one sticky mass of bliss well-mixed with string, bread crumbings, stubby slate-pencils, and the remains of certain long-deceased stickle-backs, sat with gallant aplomb on Bravo’s back, while Fairlie Glendinning walked demurely onward towards the Flower-cot by the side of handsome Rupert Glendonwyn.

VIII

THE COT OF FLOWERS

AS was somewhat clearly foreshadowed by the discovery of Master Johnny Colstoun, before mentioned, John Glendonwyn failed to discover on the road to the Brig End of Kilgour any traces of the lost "brandy-balls." He proved, however, that his brother had not misinterpreted his character by striding directly to the shop of Miss Emily Parton and ordering a pound of "brandy-balls"—in tones suitable (as that witty lady declared) to the purchase of a corresponding quantity of prussic acid.

His original biographer is of opinion that had the placid shop-woman, "fair, fat and forty," opened a drawer and said after the manner of Lady Macbeth, "Hush, we have here for the trifling price of ten golden Duncans, a very superior quality of toffee confectioned with ratsbane and deadly nightshade, hemp, and mandragora, warranted to give satisfaction, with a reduction for families and quantities," John would certainly have purchased recklessly.

On the way back, however, he found it difficult to preserve this attitude of gloomy grandeur. He lost his Ruins-of-Empire look. The humour of the situation began to strike him. He was most manifestly hoist with his own petard. For it was with his own bribe that the original brandy-balls had been bought. Nay, more, it seemed exceedingly probable that "Lil Dzanny" had gone straight to his lady love and re-

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morselessly "sold" his benefactor. Also that that young lady, herself, appreciating the assistance of a watch-dog so faithful and effective as Master Johnny Colstoun, had requested his mother to permit her to take him home with her for the night.

So soon as he had reached this conclusion in his own mind, John Glendonwyn burst into a laugh, perhaps somewhat too boisterous to be completely convincing. He was glad, so he told himself, that little Fairlie had so much spirit. Which statement, if made in good faith and not for the purpose of keeping up his own courage shows how imperfectly he understood at that time the character of the young girl.

It was therefore in a frame of mind more obviously cheerful that John found himself for the second time rounding that corner of Her Majesty's highway, at which he had been accustomed to catch the first glimpse of the house of Boatcroft.

Lights shone in the lower windows—one only in the upper, and the door stood open with an air of good fellowship, as if to welcome one more of the company in from the outer darkness.

John, such was his melancholy case, wondered if it had been left thus by Fairlie, on his account, and for a moment became quite sentimental at the thought. These things happen at two-and-twenty in the best regulated bosoms.

But alas! for his romance. Long before he could reach it the door shut with a slam from within. Whereupon there ensued a scraping of iron shovel in some covert place without, and a voice, "Weel, Kate, I caa' that a shame—to send a fellow oot for coals and then shut the door on him, so that he breaks his shins ower a wheelbarrow!"

It was the voice of Harry Glendinning, second son of David, and it was clear that no sense of pity for any wandering stranger with toffee-balls in his pocket

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had prompted him to leave the outer door of the Flower-cot open, but on the contrary a most matter-of-fact desire to see his own way whole-shinned to the coal-heap.

On the other hand, just as John strode up to the shut door, and stood a moment listening to the sound of voices within before lifting the brass knocker, a little French casement above, always white-curtained and dainty, opened noiselessly, and a face like a flower looked kindly upon him as it were out of the dark winter sky.

But it was Kate Glendinning who opened the door to him, treading like a lissom, practical-minded princess, and dusting the flour of scone-baking from her hands as she came.

Kate had no personal concern in John, but she liked him. She had known from the first moment of his first visit after his return from college in the capacity of a man, that he came to see Fairlie and not her. So with the honour that is between such thieves, she helped the lad civilly enough on his way, but took little further interest in him. Why indeed should she, Glendonwyn or no Glendonwyn?—There was no dearth of gallant young men at the Flower-cot by the great bend of the Gower Water.

Neither did Kate Glendinning cavil as to the titles and courtesies of convenience and indeed she had small sympathy with her sister's scruples on the matter. She was no school-mistress, thank heaven, but a country lass, the daughter of David Glendinning the Boat-croft joiner. If a man's name were John, and she liked him, she called him "John" and he was welcome to call her "Kate." If not, why he was equally welcome to pass by on the other side of the way.

So—"Come in, John," she cried, heartily, "no, I can't shake hands with you, or indeed with anybody but a meal-miller. I am flour to the parting of my

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hair! Sit down, lad. Your brother is here a good hour before you."

And while John Glendonwyn, still after the darkness a little dazzled with the bright lights from lamp and fireplace, stood a moment blinking on the porch, Kate hurried back into the kitchen, and disclosed a new and delicate-handed King Arthur attending to the cakes which were ranged in rows by the clear fire of peat with a bottom of coal which Harry Glendinning had been sent out to replenish.

The adaptive Rupert was engaged in turning the "farles of oat-cake," glancing at them in the professional and instructed manner of the expert. He was also giving a polite ear to the disquisitions of the master of the house, who was engaged in laying down to him the rights and wrongs of the churches—or rather (to be exact), the wrongs of all earthly churches and the sole rightness of one David Glendinning, indweller at Boatcroft in the parish of Gower.

Rupert glanced quizzically at John as if a little uncertain of the mood in which the younger might return. But he nodded approvingly at the clear boyish candour of the countenance which met him.

"It will do that boy no harm to make him fag out a bit!" he said to himself, and proceeded to give his ears to the Rectifier of Church and State, and his eyes to the swift, lightsomely alert movements of Kate Glendinning, as she sped from bake-board to fireplace and back again to the flour barrel—busy, practical, and certain of herself, not setting up to be anything that she was not, and having no airs and graces which were not natural and incident to her occupation. In good truth she had small need. For every turn of ankle and curve of neck did that business only too well for her.

She raised one arm above her head to stand the wooden rolling-pin on its end that she might cleanse

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it from its adherent dough. It was a simple act, but Rupert Glendonwyn thought that never in his life had he beheld so fine an arm or a pose of such vivid and unconscious grace.

David Glendinning, among whose shortcomings inordinate respect for the great was certainly not included, took scant notice of John's entrance, though he had not set eyes on him since the foregoing autumn. He nodded briefly, however, and went on with his oration. Neither eye-service nor man-pleasing were in the stout old joiner's heart. Indeed he rather went out of his way to vindicate his republicanism, and as it were stamped his independence upon your favourite corn.

"As I was sayin', Rupert Glendonwyn, I haud little by birth and bluid—though mark you, a man is nane the waur o' either, for my ain are as good as ony man's!—"

At this point Rupert bowed, momentarily removing his eyes from the cakes toasting on the ingle nook for the purpose.

"Na," continued David Glendinning, "a man is a man only when he stands up bare-buff in that which the guid God hath given him. Why do we not go about naked and unashamed as did our forefathers? It is juist because we hae laid aside oor manhood—or maybe——"

"The police!" suggested Rupert under his breath, in a tone intended solely for Kate and his brother. But the old man's ears were gleg.

"What's that ye say, sir? The police? But hark ye, the police are juist pairt o' the cleadin' o' the body politic. They need to be strippit aff too."

"The burglars of all nations would agree with you, sir," said Rupert, turning a cake as coolly as possible in the face of so-hot a blaze.

At this point John began to remember that he had

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seen or heard something like this before. He asked a question.

"Did I ever hear o' yin Tammas Carlyle?" cried the joiner, "Gin he be yin o' the Annandale Carlyles, I wadna wonder. Mony is the time I hae worked aside Jeems Carlyle o' Ecclesfechan, an honest man but unco stiff in his ain opeenion. I hae nae great goo o' him. An honest man—aye, I wull say that! But I canna bide thae folk that are for ever settin' up their ain puir bit opeenion as if they war Moses an' a' the prophets.

"Na, it couldna be the same that ye speak about. Weel I wat no. For Jeems Carlyle never wrote a scribe o' print, or hand-write either an' it werena sae mony roods o' stane-and-lime waa' at sae muckle a square yaird—or something practical to that effect. The son? I never heard muckle about him. I thocht Jeemses' sons were a' decent men—sma' farmers and siclike. This is the first I hae heard tell o' that had gi'en himsel' to ony siccan practises. Read his buik? I wadna bemean mysel'. There (he cried, clapping a great hand on the calfskin family Bible) that is the sole foondation o' my library. And for comment there-upon, here upon the shelf are the works all and hale o' John Knox, the man that never feared the face o' man! What wants ony man mair—an' it warena 'Tod's Ready Reckoner' at an orra time to help him to cast up a bit accoont?

"The Pilgrim's Progress? I wonder to hear ye, a college-learned man and a'! Faith, sic a collieshangie as I hae listened to in my day about that buik. I tell ye I hae nae goo o' it! Lees—lees—lees—are there nae eneuch o' them upon the earth that they should encourage the writing o' mair? I will no deny that I tried to read the rubble—but since me—sic things were never heard o' as the craitur writes about—sloughs o' despond and burnin' mountains wi' wicket gates intil

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them, an' weemen wi' little on them forbye their sarks and wings—I declare I wad hae thrown the silly clavers i' the fire had Kate there no ta'en it awa' frae me. Young hempies like her are sae licht i' the heid! A tinkler I think ye said the man was—it's a doom's peety they hadna garred him work, at his trade in Bedford jail instead o' allooin' him to pit aff his time writin' sic stuff. Had he been i' the jail at Kilgour there owerby, I wat my friend Nicholas Byrdson—little sense as he has—wad hae fitted him wi' the teasin' o' some hemp or a wee bit job at the stane-breakin' that wad hae occupied his mind, as it were, an' kepted him frae being troubled wi' daft-like dreams at nicht like yon glaikit Pilgrim's Progress! Pilgrim's Progress indeed! I wad hae pilgrimed him, the kittle-mendin' seefer!”

At the moment when David had finished his exposition of these remarkable literary opinions, the door opened which led to the staircase, and the shrill voice of little Johnny Coulston pierced the silence which ensued upon the settlement of the Strange Case of John Bunyan, late tinker.

“Did 'oo bwing me any mo' bwandy-balls—eated up all ze west—didn't losted them after all!”

And casting himself loose from Fairlie's hand the youth launched without ceremony upon John, who had quietly seated himself in a chair vacated by Harry during the latter part of David's soliloquy. For there occurred a tide each evening in the affairs of the three brothers Will, Harry, and Dick Glendinning when they judged it safe to slip out unobserved. But there were conditions to be fulfilled. They must do it one by one. The time must not be too early, or their father would tell them to sit still and listen, or set them a lengthy task at sharpening tools, cleaning planes, or what not. On the other hand the time must not be delayed too long or they might be bidden wait for “the Buik,” or even sent off to bed without appeal for con-

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templated treason. Any disobedience to authority or general freedom of opinion or action was as yet the sole privilege of the two elder girls, to whom their father could deny nothing. The boys had learned in manifold tribulation to jump at the word, or even to anticipate it, disrespect for the Fifth commandment being instantly checked by a slight movement of David's hands in the direction of his brass-buckled waist-belt of stout leather.

So with the advent of Fairlie and "Lil Dzonny" into the kitchen, the three lads recognised the psychological moment—the tide which taken at the full leads on to an evening of merry sport at the neighbouring farms—"boot stacks wi' the lasses at bogle to play." Their father removed his eye to gaze upon Johnny Colstoun, to whom as his father's son, the old man's rough heart had curiously softened from the very first time that Fairlie had brought the boy home with her. Immediately the places of Masters William, Henry, and Richard Glendinning were void and empty. The Flower-cot hearth had no less than three vacant chairs—the exact number required to seat the new-comers, John, Fairlie and "Lil Dzonny"—that is, supposing for an instant that that enterprising young gentleman would have been content to sit for three consecutive seconds in any chair which mortal hands ever framed.

That evening at the Flower-cot lives long in the memory of one at least of those who listened to the alternately humorous and sardonic soliloquies of David Glendinning—the "rapt oration flowing free"—and who watched above all the quick-glancing beauty of Kate. For the girl never for a moment ceased her work, but as soon as the baking was finished drew out her spinning wheel and laid on a sheet a huge pile of the long white woollen worms, light as gossamer, from which in those days yarn was to be spun by hand.

IX

THE NEW RUPERT

THAT night John Glendonwyn saw his brother in a new light. The hectoring sot of the inn at Drumfern Market had wholly disappeared. The heir of Castle Gower, with his foot upon his native heath, a little reckless in talk, languidly arrogant in manner, carelessly haughty, intolerant of the *canaille*, had also vanished. And lo! in his place, a handsome youth, eager and ready with offer of service the meanest and slightest, content to sit by with only admiration—quiet (but perfectly obvious to the person concerned) showing in his eyes. John, with a sudden sinking of the heart, acknowledged as he looked at Rupert, that he never saw any man so fitted to win a girl's admiration—it might be also her love.

Now as to his brother's ideas of women and his past relations with them, John knew nothing. It was the only subject upon which Rupert had not spoken freely. Indeed he had not spoken at all.

As John remembers the evening there was but little said—save of course by the Autocrat of the Armchair, and indeed the harangues from that quarter were endless—the wide mouth, thin-lipped and flexible, giving forth such a stream of argument, doctrine, and reproof in order that no one might suppose that David Glendinning in his own house did not feel himself the superior of the whole race of Glendonwyns of Castle Gower.

He addressed most of his conversation to Rupert,

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though he had never seen him since his boyhood. But with travelled readiness the elder of the brothers, accustomed to meet all manner of men, took his cue and responded with an eager willingness to be instructed which at once won upon the old dialectitian.

John, being seated at too great a distance from Fairlie to carry on any conversation with her, occupied himself in watching the girl as she bent over her copy-setting or arranged the children's seams for the next day. And to this day he has not forgotten how the wide kitchen looked that night, stone-flagged in blue squares beneath, its ceiled roof of massy beams black with the smoke of many bakings and brewings, and the bright hearth fire lighting all with its uncertain, wintry cheerfulness.

Strangely enough it was through "Lil Dzonny" that John's chance came. Hitherto he had only caught a glimpse or two of eyes shyly lifted and then as instantly dropped. For Johnny, having received earnest of the brandy-balls, straightway went back to his "teatzer" without so much as saying a decent "thank you!"

More than once, however, he had seen Rupert bend his handsomely arched black brows in the direction of Fairlie, and on one occasion he caught the girl intently studying the strange young man with his handsome head and foreign manners.

It was not long after this, however, that Johnny came softly up to John Glendonwyn, and, putting a complete double set of sticky knuckles upon his knee, observed in a mysterious undertone:

"Thay—I'se dot somefing to tell 'oo!"

"Well," said John, "what is it. Tell away!"

Johnny peered over the knee on which his hand rested in the direction of John Glendonwyn's right pocket.

"Dot any mo' bwandy-balls?" he inquired tenta-

tively, as if afraid of committing himself prematurely.

In spite of its characteristic delicacy John perceived the implied suggestion, and promptly bestowed the entire pound upon him, hoping that at least they might make him exceedingly sick and so disable him for a while. He did not yet know Johnny.

The infant Shylock accepted the brandy-balls with a gratitude which certainly could not be called more than mediocre.

"'Oo didn't fink to bwing no minth pies, did 'oo?"

The question was put without any particular hopefulness. Johnny did not expect so much sense from a Grown-Up. It was worth trying, though. You never could tell.

"No, I didn't," said John, who was growing tired, "and it strikes me, young man, that you've had quite enough."

The boy drew off and eyed his mentor sternly. Then he began in a high, level tone, one of his dreadful proclamations.

"OO NEEDN'T TALK—I SEED OO—"

"Johnny," whispered John, aghast, "remember. You promised——"

"Didn't promise ever—ever! Help—me—die!" retorted Shylock. "Only promised till pies dotted done—An pies IS done."

"Well, Johnny, what did you come to tell me?" asked John, placably, hoping thus to divert the thoughts of the young blackmailer from his fell intent.

"S'ant tell 'oo," said Johnny, sulkily.

"Not if I give you another sixpence to get more mince pies to-morrow?" suggested John, like one tampering with justice.

"'Thillin'!" said Johnny in a stage whisper.

The business being settled on these terms, Johnny bent himself close to John's ear and whispered:

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"Teatzter wants 'oo to help her wif her book!"

John rose and went over to where Fairlie was knitting her brows over her grammar and dictionary. She had a small reading lamp before her on a table. Her father had brought it from Drumfern, and she herself had manufactured a pretty pink silk shade for it, having, it is to be feared, regard in her choice of colour more to her complexion than to the actinic quality of the light cast upon the page.

As John approached, Fairlie looked up with a pout of the lips and a slight blush.

"It is this horrid Latin," she explained, hurriedly. "I am trying to learn it by myself—I do so want to help the boys. And besides I am dreadfully ignorant—and—and I don't want to be!"

John in his heart of hearts thought this ignorance quite as adorable as any desire for knowledge, and much more bewitching than the possession of it. He had the true masculine ideas about the education of women—which indeed are largely identical with those of the ancient Greeks. But he could not fail to perceive matter to his own advantage in Fairlie's admission.

"If you would let me come over sometimes when you have a spare hour, I think I could help you," he said modestly.

"You see I do not care to trouble Mr. Colstoun," continued Fairlie. "I am occupied at the hours when he is teaching his Latin classes or I should ask him to let me be a scholar."

John drew a chair and sat down by Fairlie. The atmosphere of a sweet, warm, glowing girlhood instantly enveloped him and he could scarcely unriddle the simple difficulties which lie in the path of the self-taught for the fluttering of his heart. Never since he had first come back from college to find little Fairlie grown out of all knowledge, into a woman with most

of the bewitching graces of childhood still sweet upon her, had he been so near her.

He was unconscious alike of the swift-falling glances of Kate Glendinning, the sly, quiet amusement with which his brother regarded him, and the more dangerous inspection of the temporarily bribed Johnny. In vain the great voice of the Old Grey Wolf ululated, rising and falling like the pack baying down forest aisles with the quarry full in view. But John Glendonwyn neither looked nor listened.

A breath was on his cheek. The timbre of an excellent low voice in his ear. All Gaul was never divided into three parts to such an accompaniment of meeting hands and fluttering hearts. He raised his eyes, and lo! the shell-pink deepened on her cheek to rose-red. Infinitives were never more perfect than those which John explained. Even the eccentricities of *ut* with the Subjunctive were elevated into the realm of poetry. This hour was to John the crown of the day—nay, of all the barren year. The bitterness of his late homecoming, Veronica's acrid tonics of the morning, the solitary tramp with dismal thoughts along the lochside, the disappointment of the walk home—all were instantly forgotten.

It was with a start that he became conscious of a sudden hush stealing over the kitchen. Without a word Fairlie pushed away her books. Old David stepped to the door and in a loud voice sent forth a monosyllable which cracked in the frosty air like a pistol shot.

"Boys!"

Then going to the open cupboard and lifting down the family Bible, he laid it open on the table before him, and so sat in waiting, erect and stately as a priest about to perform a sacred oblation. All David Glendinning's follies and peculiarities seemed to fall off him at the approach of the evening Hour of Prayer.

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Rupert had risen to his feet, with instinctive intent to take his leave, but David stopped him with a large gesture of the hand, not unimpressive in its dignity of simplicity.

"Stay—" he said, "them that company wi' us in this my hoose, bide to worship wi' us likewise."

John Glendonwyn did not fall into the same mistake, being stopped by the slightest touch of soft fingers on his arm as he was about to follow his brother's example.

The three boys trooped silently in—indeed as it might be more exactly expressed, they "skulked" to their appointed places—having to pass the stern saluting point of their father's chair, where on a round-backed throne of bog-oak he sat looking unconquerable and Rhadamantine. One long grey lock fell over his brow, and he stroked his thin hair downwards with his hand before clearing his throat to begin. It was all the hairdressing it ever got from January to December.

Once or twice John's eye fell on his brother during what followed. Rupert sat a little dazed like a man who, turning the handle of a door to enter a theatre, finds himself unexpectedly among the worshippers in a crowded church.

There is little left to tell of that first night at David Glendinning's Cot of Flowers. The solemn voice of the house-priest in the presence of the One Master he acknowledged—the triumph of the true spirit over the weak and beggarly elements of prejudice and egotism in which they were ordinarily shrouded, were very impressive to John Glendonwyn.

It was the time of departure. The three lads had filed up the stairs to bed immediately after the "Taking of the Book."

David came to the door to bid his visitors good-night, and stood talking to John about Fairlie's work

at the Academy, in which, in spite of his contempt for literature, he was genuinely interested.

"Though no thoroughly enlightened on releegious topics," said David with quite unwonted moderation, "Maister Hairry Colstoun is a sterlin' man wha's word is his bond. And they tell me, though a wee ready wi' the taws, a graund instructor o' youth. Some folk work ae way, and some anither. Henry Colstoun applies the necessary persuasion in the place, as yin micht say, appointit by Nature therefor. And his way is nae doot the best for unruly callants. 'Mair poo'er to his richt arm,' says Davvid Glendinnin'.

"Noo there again is my lassie Fairlie. She canna use a pair o' taws to hurt a flee. She wad greet like a gardener's waterin' can to set her foot on a bum-clock, and she performs meeracles o' bandagin' on a Willie Wag-tail's leg. But, heard ye ever the lilt i' the voice like hers—she has the airt o't. I tell ye man, she can wile the verra bird aff the tree, and hae a' the bit wild things, sparra's and shilfies and Rabin Reed-breests, that naebody cares aboot but God maybes—happin' on the back o' her hand and takkin' their 'daich' oot atween her lips."

In his heart of hearts John wished nothing better than that he, too, had been one of the feathered outcasts her father had mentioned, to be so treated. He wondered whither she had gone, but in an instant the sound of horse's hoofs was heard and Fairlie came forward a little hastily, taking her father's arm and leading him out upon the road beyond the sparred palings of the little cottage.

Looking back over his shoulder John saw his brother and Kate Glendinning advancing as it had been from some outbuilding where "Bravo" had been tethered.

Upon some pretext of altering the girths or rearranging the stirrup Rupert stopped, and, after saying

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something in a low voice, he took Kate's hand and raised it, foreign fashion, to his lips.

The girl drew back instantly with a proud stiffening of her figure, and the next instant David Glendinning had turned towards them and the little scene was over.

The two brothers left the group of three standing by the gate—their figures dark against the thin sprinkle of frozen snow on the ground. Turning round once more, John noticed that it was Kate, who had gone in first. Fairlie stood by her father's side and watched them out of sight.

But John was far too young and simple to read the riddle contained in that fact.

* * * * *

It was Rupert who spoke first.

"I suppose it will be 'ride-and-tie,'" he said with a glance at Bravo, who strode alongside, lifting his feet straight up with a dancing movement and tossing his head continually. "We will go by the long avenue and make the first tie at the end of Polton Mill. You take next turn of Bravo. You can leave him for me at the Bogle Thorn. Then I will stable him with Alec Steel at Parkhill and you can ride him home.

"Rupert," said John, heavily, "first I must know whether you intend any mischief to those girls. I want to be sure of that before there can be any further converse between us!"

"Hoity, toity!" cried the elder brother, laughing, good humouredly, "what have we here? *Mon dieu*, my good Master Sly Boots, did you expect to keep such a couple of country beauties all to yourself? What a little Grand Turk it is—and a parson to boot! Well, the characters often go together!"

"No, Rupert," said John, "it is different with me. I have known the girls all my life. I am a simple fellow

and they both know me root and branch. You come from far countries and grand courts. You appear to them like a fairy prince. See how all the servants at the castle bow down to you! You can only do harm here, Rupert—if you are fair you must see that. You know that after what has happened and the sacrifices our father has made for you, you simply *must* marry Miss Carslaw. It is your only chance. I ask you—I pray you, Rupert, to let these girls alone. You can only bring sorrow on a good man's house. I saw you kiss Kate's hand to-night—and I do believe——”

“What do you believe?” cried Rupert, still laughing, but with somewhat less assurance than before.

“That no man ever did as much before!” he said, lamely enough.

“Pshaw, man!” said his brother, “that was simply nothing. Why, it is the commonest salutation between people of quality where I have come from. The girl is proud as Lucifer, besides being a raging and tearing beauty, with the air of a Brahmin twice born when she is offended.”

“Kate Glendinning is as well born as you or I, Rupert, as you know very well,” said John, “and as to kissing her hand—well, it is not the custom here, whatever it may be in Italy or Spain. It is plain, even-down love-making—that is what it is, if you ask me!”

“Dear Innocence!” said Rupert, “Do you suppose I did not spot your game with that other entrancing little blue-stockings? Hands that touch over learned dictionaries of course are exempt. Love-pats on arms go duty free. They do not count. It is the custom here. But we must not kiss—oh no—never. Shocking! We would not think of such a thing—not even hands. Oh, white and thrice blessed innocence!”

And Rupert merrily whistled a stave:

MS. A. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1.

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*"Gin a body meet a body
Comin' through the rye:
Gin a body kiss a body
Need a body cry?"*

Now among Rupert's accomplishments was a peculiarly low and flute-like whistle which, added to the aptness of the words, had almost the effect of an argument.

But John was not convinced. With a strong resolution he took his brother's arm affectionately.

"Rupert, give this up," he said, earnestly, "you cannot marry either of them. Do not come here again. Think of your father and of Miss Carslaw!"

Suddenly Rupert shook off his brother's hand.

"What if I say as much to you, good Master Spoilsport—think of your father and Miss Veronica Cæsar! I have every bit as much right. More than that, let me tell you once for all—it is monstrosly dull at the best of times in this hole. You are only down for a fortnight, and I, who have to stay here all the year round, do not propose to submit the list of my acquaintance for your approval or disapproval!"

So saying Rupert Glendonwyn, with no further words about arrangements for ride-and-tie, mounted his horse Bravo and galloped furiously home, leaving his younger brother to trudge the weary miles to Castle Gower through the winter midnight with thoughts of bitter self-accusation and the gloomiest of foreboding gnawing at his heart.

X

THE GREY WOLF AT BAY

JOHN GLENDONWYN was spending the latter part of his last session in Edinburgh in attendance on some science classes which he had long desired to take, while awaiting the necessary preliminaries of his presentation to the Parish of Gower. He had already received his "license to preach" at the hands of the Presbytery of Kilgour, the Reverend Dr. Augustus Cæsar presiding thereat like Jove over the councils of the Immortals.

Some time before the period at which the story has now arrived, Mr. Gilbert Aiblins had resigned the pastoral charge of the parish of Gower on the ground of ill health, and retired to Drumfern with a private document locked in his desk by which Gregory Glendonwyn of Castle Gower and his heirs, and John Glendonwyn, proximate presentee of the parish of Gower, bound themselves conjointly and severally to pay to the Reverend Gilbert Aiblins the sum of Two Hundred and Fifty Pounds (£250) yearly at the Whitsunday and Michaelmas terms, until such time as the aforesaid Gilbert should be settled in a benefice worth that sum per annum, when the aforesaid allowance of Two Hundred and Fifty Pounds (£250) was to cease and determine. Nor after this satisfaction completed, was the said Reverend Gilbert Aiblins to have any further claim upon the aforesaid Gregory and John Glendonwyn, their heirs or assigns for ever and ever.

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So far then as the outside of the cup and platter was concerned, all was in train. The thoughts which had haunted John Glendonwyn as to his fitness for the office of the ministry gradually yielded to new interests, the chief of which was of course his growing love for little Fairlie Glendinning. Directly, indeed (upon the testimony of a manuscript of late date in his life) he had not said a word to her concerning the desire of his heart, during the fortnight of his Christmas vacation, though he had been brought into converse with the girl every day and had walked home with her every night—sometimes with the company of Johnny, but more frequently without. But he had read Cæsar with her diligently, and hunted through grammar and dictionary with unparalleled enthusiasm. Yet, to his credit or discredit, according to the point of view, he had refrained from all overt lovemaking—though doubtless his heart was plain as a printed book to Fairlie and her sister.

Indeed no one who saw these two together could for a moment doubt (on John's side at least), the hold which the attachment had upon him. And once Veronica Cæsar, walking in the twilight with her father to call upon a sick parishioner, turned the old man round upon the Gower Bridge that he might tell her the name of a particular star (which she knew much better than he did), in order that Fairlie and John might pass by deep in discussion of the famous campaigns of that first of the doctor's name to set foot upon the shores of Britain. Neither disputant saw the minister or his daughter, though their figures must have loomed up black against the pale glimmer of the stream. And though on more than one occasion Veronica had declared so absolutely her intentions with regard to marriage in general and with John Glendonwyn in particular, doubt it not that that was a strange pang which struck into her breast as she took her father's

THE GREY WOLF AT BAY 103

arm and walked along after these two dim figures in front, now grown invisible in the darkness to any eyes but hers.

After his departure John had heard from Fairlie once or twice during the last dreary months of the college year. She was working hard—her final examination near at hand. She wanted the best certificate she could obtain. The evenings were lengthening and she did not mind the walk home so much. On dark nights 'one of the boys' would come with her—she meant either Harry or Dick. Mr. Colstoun too had been kind. He let them out of school an hour earlier on purpose. There was a passage in that dreadful fourteenth chapter of *Cæsar*—would John be kind enough to explain it to her, etc., etc.

From Rupert the young divinity student had heard nothing at all. Nor had the brothers spoken during the remainder of John's stay in Gower. His father generally communicated to him in simple numerals through his banker in Drumfern. He had received no tidings of the parish save such as Veronica sent him in severely practical epistles beginning "Dear John," and ending "your friend V."—a title which Veronica felt she could assuredly claim, though by no means so certain that John deserved that she should permit him to use it.

John, among other studies not markedly theological, had been giving himself with characteristic enthusiasm to the new science of geology. His zeal was kindled by the place which Scotsmen were taking in the founding of it. Many a snell blowy afternoon he might have been found with a hammer in his hand, square-faced, workmanlike, knapping away among the shales out at Burdiehouse or lunching in its deserted limestone workings, which look so like the entrance of those mysterious caves,

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*"Where Alph the sacred river ran
Through caverns measureless to man,
Down to a sunless sea."*

Perhaps after all it was as good a theological education as he could have got. For he had this year no companions. They had fled to other spheres of labour—to parishes, assistantships, country tutorships. John Glendonwyn was that most utter stranger in a strange land—a college man out of his year.

All the spring he sat on benches with men who knew him not. He competed without enthusiasm for prizes which he cared not whether he lost or won.

All his pleasure was in wandering, a scone or two in his pocket, the cool spring water his drink, out on the grey-green scalp of Pentland, among the red grouse and the early returning whaups and lapwings; or in delving among the wooded dingles which cluster about the southerly flanks of that bold ridge, little white-bibbed dippers bowing and becking before him upon water-washed stones or busily diving in the foamy tumbles of the burns, pert, jerky wagtails skurrying off at his approach, and sometimes high overhead the missel-thrush, bold yet vigilant, uttering its defiant chant from the top of some chance-rooted pine-tree.

A book made a comfortable oblong in his pocket—Milton or Grey—or perchance some younger poet not yet so famous. In this fashion his life passed away, not without a certain peace of contentment and forthcoming. His lodgings were in the cluster of little houses constituting the last southerly outpost of the city, at that time called "David Dean's Houses" looking out on the great grey Salisbury crags and with the lion of Arthur's Seat sombrely couchant across the deep valley. John liked the place better because many a night when sleep refused his eyelids, he could step out and passing through the little

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clacking swing gate, find himself in a moment among the large airs and wide breathing spaces of the King's Park of Holyrood.

One afternoon John was returning from a walk to Craigmillar Castle, where, seated on a stone bench in the great hall he had spent hours in watching the rooks busy about their stick-carrying and cares domestic in the tall trees of the south-looking pleasaunce. It was a snell, sunshiny, easterly-blowing day—the dust whirling in cloudy spirals along all the highways, and the ploughmen's teams crawling to and fro across the ruddy springtime fields.

Tired and not a little dusty John was thankfully pulling out his latch-key to enter his rooms, when the outer door of the cottage opened of itself, and his landlady's daughter appeared with finger on lip.

"There's a man in there that wants fell to see ye, Maister John," she said, with the universal commiseration of landlady's daughters for young men in trouble (when their own rent-books are settled to date). "He wadna gie his name, but he said twice ower that he wad wait till sic time as ye should think fit to come in. He wanted to see the ither rooms i' the hoose, but as I kenned naething aboot the man or his business and he had a wild taver look, I juist said that the ither rooms were a' occupied, an' that he couldna see them."

John nodded, and with the clearest conscience in the world went up to his first-floor sitting-room three stairs at a time. He knew of no man whom he had any reason to be afraid of facing.

He opened the door sharply and there, standing by the mantel-piece, with a foolish little pen-and-ink picture of Fairlie in his hand upon which John had wasted much valuable time, was old David Glendinning.

John advanced with his hand outstretched and a swift gladness of welcome on his face, which how-

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ever was instantly dashed when the old man, with one of those tremendous gestures to which only common folk can attain in moments of great mental distress, threw down the poor little picture and stamped on it. John stopped involuntarily with his hand outstretched, thinking that sudden madness must have overtaken Fairlie's father.

"Where are my two daughters?—Give them up to me—I charge you by God and his Christ!" cried David Glendinning, advancing upon John with a threatening air. The young man stood aghast and speechless.

"Your daughters," he repeated after him in the blankest astonishment. "Why, where are they? Surely no ill has come to—to either of them?"

The old man raised his clenched hand high above his head as if to strike John to the ground; but, instantly changing his intention, dropped it again and speaking in an altered voice, and in that Bible English which the Scottish peasant uses so naturally in times of strong excitement, he made his pitiful plea.

"If you have hidden them away from me, I beseech you by heaven and your hopes of salvation to let me see them. Ye hae broken my heart among you, but naeboddy kens yet, and I will tak' them hame again wi' me."

John Glendonwyn's face had been growing paler and paler during these words, and he stood trying to realise what had happened. The old man advanced and caught his hand eagerly and pitifully.

"John," he cried hoarsely, "I aye thocht mair o' ye than ony o' your kind, and never that ye desired ill to me and mine. Let the bairns come back to the old man, their father. And before God, nane shall be the wiser—nane shall cast word or look upon them. A' shall be forgi'en and forgotten!"

"Sir," said poor John, hanging his head, "as God

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sees me I know nothing of what you say. I wish I did. I have heard nothing either of Fairlie and Kate. Till this moment I was ignorant they had left home. My thoughts—and—my prayers were with them there—that is, with Fairlie—and—and with Kate too. I would have given my life to serve either of them."

As he spoke the old man's face had been putting on its grimmest Grey Wolf expression.

"Ah, ye deny, do ye?" he cried, "Then by the God you have invoked I will make you confess. Look on that writing and deny it if you dare."

He dashed a scrap of crumpled paper in front of John Glendonwyn's hand. There came a curious prickling mist, dry and tense, into the young man's eye-balls as he tried to read, and for a moment he could not gather the sense. Concerning the handwriting, however, he was in no doubt. It was Rupert's. It read as follows:

"The carriage will be waiting at four o'clock. Walk out along the Drumfern Road till you meet it. The coachman will have a blue ribband-knot on his whip and the same about his hat. He will stop when you hold up your left hand. It will be best not to wait for F.'s return from school. After that, trust me to care for all."

"Well?" cried David Glendinning in a voice astonishingly loud and strident, "Do you own your handiwork? If not, I will go before the judges of the land, as I have already been to your own father and see if they will right me."

"And what said my father?" said John, his coolness coming back to him quite suddenly.

"Say—what could he say, but that he had begotten a monster, a breaker up of homes—an evil beast that had brought him naught but trouble and vexation all

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the days of his life? Then he told me where I would find you, and sent me on my way. He said that he would not move so much as one of his little fingers to shield you from the consequences of what you have done!"

"My father said that—" groaned John, sitting down, "Let me think. I do not see my way! I do not understand."

"Let me see my daughters, I tell you, give me back my Fairlie, my Kate!" cried the angry father, "Or, by the God whom I have served these sixty years I will slay you with my hand, and He who knows the evil and the good, the false and the true, will hold me both scathless and guiltless!"

John looked up quickly at David Glendinning's appeal.

"See," he said, "I would have stricken off that right hand had it written such words. But they are none of mine. Look at these and these! He thrust a half-finished college essay, half-a-dozen note books, and innumerable scattered papers which happened to be on the table across to the old man. He opened a desk in which were all Fairlie's little simple notes, and the first three pages of a letter which he had begun to her.

"These are in my handwriting," he cried, "compare them with that which you have shown me. I leave the verdict to yourself."

The old man dropped into a chair, searched long and earnestly in his pockets for the spectacles which he had already on his nose when John came in. Then when the young man gently pointed them out, he thrust aside his hand pettishly and spread out the papers on the table. There was indeed no similarity. The essays and papers were written in a small, neat, collegiate script. The crumpled paper which David Glendinning had brought, on the other hand, was unformed and clumsy in handwriting.

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But in spite of this the old man was but half-convinced.

"But ye may hae forged the hand o' write," he said, doubtfully, "ye are a college-bred man and it may be able for sic things. I hae heard o' the like. But what matters the paper. I tell ye my son heard them speak, speakin' aboot you the nicht afore, and yin o' them was greetin' sair."

"Which one?" said John, quickly. His head was buried between his palms and he was thinking swiftly.

"It was Kate that spak' your name maist, Will said, but it was wee Fairlie that was greetin'!" replied the old man, after a pause.

John Glendonwyn put a neatly folded bundle of papers into the joiner's chipped and roughened hand. His old Sunday hat lay on the table and his ludicrous "blacks," runkled and crinkled, worlds too big for his shrunk shanks, hung about him like a winding sheet and flapped as he moved.

"There," said John Glendonwyn, "is every scrap of paper that has passed between Fairlie and myself. I had one note from Kate the week Fairlie was laid up with a cold. It is with the others. She sent me a college book Fairlie had borrowed. And here are my answers, every one from first to last."

He lifted a copying-book out of a little press of japanned iron. "I loved her, sir, with all my heart, though I never told her more than you will find written here. And I would not speak till I had the right. But in writing I gave her of my best. And I have copied every line and syllable here. They are clear for you to read, and as for plotting mischief against my heart's beloved or her sister—I think you, who have watched me from a child, might have known me better."

"Nane kens the heart when the blood o' youth rins red," said the old man sententiously, "but 'deed I

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thocht nane that ill o' ye, Johnny lad. And yet—and yet——”

“What is it—speak out. Perhaps I can clear all!” cried John.

“Little fear but I will speak,” said the old man, “Davvid Glendinning has not travelled frae the Boat-croft o' the Gower Water to this place o' noises and cryings without resolvin' to speak his mind, all and whole. To be brief wi' ye then, your ain father as good as told me that he had proof that you were the deceiver o' my bairns.”

“My own father takes away my good name,” groaned John, “God help me—what shall I do?”

“Do!” cried the old man, “confess and mak' reparation. As by the Lord ye shall!”

For the second time the memory of his wrongs came again upon him more mightily than before.

“Yea, by the great Lord that rides in heaven by his name JAH, an' ye were the king's ain son, ye shall answer and mak' amends. My bonny ewe lambs that were a' my pleasure and chieftest delicht—they are stolen away! Oh God, set the thief before me and grant strength to thae auld hands. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. But oh, grant it to me, even to me, Davvid Glendinning, to prepare the way. I will do my pairt on the earth as He will do His—on the throne o' judgment high and lifted up in the day o' His wrath!”

“I swear again before God and you, the father of the one dearest to me on earth,” said John solemnly, “that other communication than I have put before you I have not held by speech or writing with either of your daughters.”

“Then I bid you tell me,” cried Glendonwyn, “being, as your father informs me, contracted in marriage with the dochter o' Dr. Augustus Cæsar, what richt ye

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had to hold any communication whatsoever with the one ewe lamb o' Davvid Glendinning?"

John Glendonwyn answered readily:

"It is true that in our childhood the parents of Veronica Cæsar and myself agreed together that we should marry. But since no man has a right to arrange the life of his tellow, she and I have long ago decided mutually that we would never fulfil the contract."

"Then, as God sees you, there is nae purpose o' marriage between you and Veronica Cæsar?" demanded the old man eagerly.

"Nor ever has been!" said John, clearly and definitely. "Veronica herself will tell you the same gladly. I never meant to marry any born of woman—save little Fairlie, that is if she would have a fellow like me."

"Ye speak greatly like an honest man, I admit," said David, looking dubiously at him from under his shaggy grey eye-brows, "but I am mair than ever perplexed, yea, even dumbfounded and put to confusion. I ken not what to think. My puir innocent lasses!—Sore—sore were they left to themsel's! For what, an it werena a love-ploy, wad hae garred them leave a hame that was their ain, a faither wad gladly hae letten them walk rough-shod ower his body, that wad hae laid doon his life for theirs as pleased-like as he lays doon his tool-skep at nicht, that never spak' a word in wrath to either o' them—though, Guid kens, no at a' times ower canny wi' his tongue either to friend or fremit!"

John sat down and put his hands affectionately on the knees of David's black trousers. As the joiner did not attend church these were strictly kept for funerals at which he was called upon to attend in his professional capacity. They were thin and thread-

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bare, for the old man spent characteristically little on himself.

"Tell me all there is to tell," said John, looking him in the face, "I will go straight back to Gower with you, and we will find Kate and Fairlie—never fear. I know their hearts, believe me, for I have watched them—and most of all Fairlie, ever since as a child of eight she rode my pony to school while I ran contentedly by her side."

The father shook his head sadly.

"Ah, would that I could think sae," he said, the tardy tears for the first time trickling down his furrowed cheeks. It seemed to give an edge to the pathos when John noticed that he had tried to shave himself before coming, and how imperfectly he had succeeded. There were the marks of slight cuts inflicted by a shaking hand and the grey patches of a three-days' growth under the chin told their own tale. Kate would never have allowed him to go from home like that.

"I ken, I ken," he groaned, when John hoping to divert his attention, offered to send for a barber, "I am no as I ocht to be, but ye see she was aye that particular aboot me, biddin' me tak' off my boots when I cam' ben and sit in the great parlour chair when I was tired. My lassies—my lassies—my bonnie lassies! What for could they no hae trustit their faither? Was he ever unkind or unthochtfu'? Surely no. Yet baith o' them—that were as the aipples o' my twa e'en—aiipples o' gowd in a basket o' silver—hae gane and left me in my auld age. Oh, heartless, heartless!"

"Was there no message?" said John. "Can you tell me how it happened?"

"Tell ye, laddie," said David, "there is no muckle to tell. Mair is the peety! Ye see it was this way: Fairlie was lang in comin' hame frae the schule that nicht, and Kate said to me that she wad pit on her cloak and gang and meet her along the road."

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“‘What need?’ says I, (I was plainin’ the lid o’ Sanders Dow’s step-mither’s coffin at the time and that’s the way I mind sae weel) ‘gar Wull gang when he comes in.’

“But Kate only answered that she was anxious and wad gang herself. So I didna debar her,—indeed, when did I say her nay?—and in anither meenit she was back wi’ her bonnet on and the muckle dark blue serge cloak that I bocht at Drumfern last Michaelmas about her shooders.

“‘Guidnicht, faither,’ she says, standin’ on her tip-taes to gie me a kiss, as was aye her heartsome way.

“‘Havers, lassie,’ says I, ‘yin wad think ye war gaun to the mune or awa’ to London toon at the least. Ye will meet Fairlie afore ye get to the Brig End!’

“But she only gied a kind o’ queer bit lauch—I mind it noo. It comes back to me as clear as clear. It was like the way she lauched when she had the scarlet fever an’ was licht i’ the heid! But (me no mindin’, wi’ haein’ Sanders Dow’s step-mither’s coffin to finish that nicht) I bade her be back to mak’ the tea for the laddies, and she gaed oot through the door. An’ frae that hour to this I hae never set e’en on either o’ my twa bairns.”

“Had you no letter or news of any kind?”

“Aye—this!” said David Glendinning, putting his hand in his breast-pocket. He drew out a note folded small, as Fairlie was in the habit of doing with her correspondence. John knew the fashion of it at the first glance. The sight of that little oblong of bluish paper on his table had often made his heart leap as he entered his room of nights.

Indeed when it was anyway near the time appointed, he began to look for it when he was half-way up the stairs.

David Glendinning was regarding him fixedly.

“I canna help trustin’ ye, laddie,” he said, “in spite

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o' your ain faither—aye, in spite o' mysel'. I canna believe ye hae cognisance o' ony hurt dune to my bairns. Hae!"

And he stretched out the letter.

"You are quite sure that you wish me to read it?" said John.

With a groan the old man cast his hands out from him, laying his arms abroad upon the table.

"Read, laddie, read!" he said. "As to Davvid Glendinning, the Lord hath forgotten to be gracious to him!"

John's hand was shaking and his eyes were dim as he unfolded the note. He knew the little trick of double-folding which held Fairlie's sheet together. Her father had thrust it back clumsily, but the lover noted the original creases still on the paper, and thought of the deft little fingers that had made them and the sweet childish eyes that had watched the result. Were there tears in them then—and was it for her own or for another's transgression? Surely not for her own!

This it said in clear unmistakable characters—the script in which Fairlie Glendinning set her copy-heads.

"Our dear, very dear father, This at the first will make you sad, but it is for the best and there is no other way. Trust your Fairlie and the time will come when we shall creep happily home to your hearth and heart. All is not well, but this seems the only way to make ill things better. Meantime God keep you and the boys and all who truly love us. Do not cast us off, for we love you—and that is why we go!"

There was no signature, but the letter was unmistakably in Fairlie's hand, the characters vivid and distinct, written without haste and without tremulousness. The girl might have been setting one of her

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pupil's copy books, for all the signs of emotion which the manuscript betrayed.

One thing struck John Glendonwyn as curious. There was no direct mention of Kate, and save in the pronouns "we" and "us" no reference to her. Yet hitherto it had always been Kate who had taken the lead in everything, and her sister who had acquiesced in her decisions, made in many cases without her knowledge. Why, then so suddenly should the elder have abdicated her position, and permitted Fairlie to take the lead?

David had lifted his head and now sat earnestly regarding the young man, his eyes fixed in his head as if he desired to read into his very soul.

"Well?" he said, gravely and sternly, "what think ye?"

"On my soul," said John, earnestly, "I think that the matter may not be so serious as it appears at present. I am glad to have read Fairlie's letter. It eases my heart. She speaks as if a return were not only possible but certain. She looks forward to peace and happiness. Would she write in that way, think you, if any great or fatal peril were hanging over them? Have you ever known Fairlie to tell a lie, or to hide anything from you that she ought to have revealed to you?"

"I cannot recall exactly that she revealed these to me," said David, dryly, laying his hand upon the little packet of school-girl letters to John Glendonwyn. "But you forget—there is another thing. Be good enough to explain this upon any comfortable and harmless supposition!"

And once more he laid before him the crumpled scrap of paper which in his first anger he had snatched out of John's hand and thrown upon the floor.

"Carriages and coachmen and secret trystings—to carry twa lasses awa' frae their faither's hoose, wha's

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heart never yearned but to do them guid! They leave him alone and shamed in his auld age? See the words —‘trust me to care for all.’ ‘Him—him—!’ Who is ‘him?’ God who set his mark on Cain, gie me this yae thing on earth—grant to thine unworthy servant that while in the flesh these hands may meet about the throat of *him—him—him—who—will—care—for—all!*”

He said the last words with a concentration of bitter hatred which made John shudder, thinking as he did of the evening prayer that first night on which Rupert had sat by David Glendinning’s hearth with his black eyes glittering and his languidly gracious smile.

The letter was post-marked Drumfern, and had been delivered at Boatcroft the next day by the Larbrax postman on his way up the valley. Manifestly Kate had received it in her father’s absence.

“There is much that is mysterious in this disappearance,” said John, manfully, “but on my soul nothing at all that is hopeless. The solution escapes us, that is all. Tell me, have you inquired at Drumfern as to the arrival of a carriage with two girls?—It seems to me that it was impossible that such an equipage could escape remark in a place of the size of Drumfern.”

“I have inquired,” said David, “and that diligently, going from door to door like one that gathers alms. No carriage ever was hired there. None ever passed the toll-bars—and none was ever seen on the roads. At least I have heard of neither man nor woman who met with sic like. But all admit that the night was stormy, with a driving snow that sent all who could, indoors to the friendly ingle nook.”

John rose and handed the crumpled note back to David Glendinning.

“Sir,” he said, “after you have satisfied yourself here that I have had neither art nor part in the busi-

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ness, I will accompany you to Kilgour, and do my best to unriddle the mystery. But first I wish you to be thoroughly satisfied. My landlady here will tell you I have never been away save at college, and for an afternoon walk like that to the Castle of Craigmillar to-day. I have dined here alone every night—breakfasted here every morning. My professors and fellow-students will bear me witness what I did with my mornings—and if further testimony be needed, the quarrymen at Burdiehouse and Eskside, the pitmen of Newbattle and the castlekeepers of Craigmillar and Borthwick will declare what hours I have spent with them.”

But David lifted up his hand with an action of solemn negation.

“Nay,” he said, “mine own eyes have seen! I do not need landladies and professors to advise me. I am content. Not you—not you, laddie but another hath done this. And, oh, John—whiles—whiles I would to God that it had been yoursel’!”

XI

RECONCILIATION

JOHN found his brother alone in the great drawing-room at Gower Castle. He was smoking a cigar with his legs lying indolently upon another armchair, and gazing out to sea across the flashing waters of the Solway.

"Well, young scapegrace," he cried, removing his cigar and stretching out his hand, "what is this we hear of you—running off a couple of girls from the parish of which you are to be the parson? What will the 'unco-guid' say to that as a clerical qualification? And how you manage to do it on a hundred a year, beats me. I suppose you have brought a little schedule back to the governor from Edinburgh—all for post-horses and marriage lines. Though what you wanted with a brace of brides—hang me if I can make out. One to keep the other company when you were away off explaining things, I suppose!"

John Glendonwyn, haggard and unkempt after a long night's travel, and the sleepless anxiety which had preyed upon his mind, stood indignantly before his brother.

"Rupert," he said, when he had sufficiently commanded himself, "enough of this! Where have you hidden the girls? I have come to find out, I warn you of that. For that it was you and you alone who planned and carried out the elopement, I have not the shadow of a doubt. The note which was sent to the school and received by Fairlie Glendinning has been

found. I have seen it, and though there is some attempt to disguise the hand, I know it to be yours."

As he spoke he took a paper from his pocket and gave it to Rupert. The elder brother swiftly thrust out his hand to take it, but a shade of disappointment crossed his face as his eyes fell upon it.

"My writing!" he cried, and laughed sardonically, "why that is yours, John. I wonder that you have the face to deny it."

"That is only a copy, as you well know," retorted John, fiercely. "The original is with the girl's father, where it will remain till the appointed time."

"My dear and too simple boy," said Rupert tolerantly, "I have a little elementary advice to give you. Papa is not exactly pleased with you, and he might make things singularly unpleasant all round. Do not anger him and I will see you through. I know nothing whatever of the girls. I suppose that they had their own reasons for wishing to depart in the direction of Gretna. But, at least, as you see *I* am not the happy man. That is all I know, and unless you are greatly belied, *you are*. So the less said the better, Parson Jack!"

"Rupert," said John sadly, seeing the hopelessness of trying to force his brother to confess, "I have nothing to do with the affair, as very well you know. I am not given to telling lies. At any rate, there are plenty of people to prove that I never quitted Edinburgh, but have been busy with my work all day and every day, as David Glendinning assured himself has been the case."

Rupert wagged his finger reprovingly at John.

"So young and yet so sly,—where did you learn it all?" he said "So much earthly wisdom where there should only be that of the other world. Reverend sir, of course, having the choice of your time, you would naturally make arrangements to prove an *alibi* of the

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sort likely to go down with a half-crazed old man. But even you will admit that I, whom you come here hectoring to accuse—I who have been spending my time in beseeching my father to moderate his anger against you, have an answer worth a hundred *alibis*!—Look, here!”

He threw off a light coverlet which had been lightly thrown over his knees and discovered his right leg bound in splints and swathed in bandages. It was on a foot-rest and the damage appeared formidable indeed. John stared aghast.

Rupert nodded lightly, almost flippantly.

“Yes,” he said, “I broke my ankle-bone three weeks ago last Tuesday. Bravo shied at a piece of paper and threw me—a nasty trick of his. He hates to come suddenly on anything white. I had stayed too late at the Cross Keys with some men I knew. The governor is not so sharp-set on the sentry-go as he used to be—sees it is no use, I expect. But I’ve been in this room ever since—never out of it. Not believe me? Well here comes Grierson and the doctor. Stop and see the dressing, John. It will ease your doubts.”

The butler of Castle Gower showed in a tall, slim, dark man with close-set sinister eyes.

“How do, Warner? See here, Grierson, how long is it since I was laid by the heels here? ‘Three weeks and two days!’ say you. Right, my old cock-chaffer, you’ve not forgotten your dates, if you are getting so blind that you bump ten times a day into the mahogany of my foot-rest and nearly drive me distracted.

“Thank you, doctor—all goes well enough. This is unwrapping day, had you forgotten? My brother wants to stop and see the operation. Not much to see now, is there, Warner? He ought to have been here a week ago—eh, doctor? Then we could have shown him something worth looking at.”

At this moment Grierson came in again. He had gone out in the midst of Rupert's chatter.

"If you please, Master John, Mr. Glendonwyn is waiting to see you in the library!"

"*Whee—eeew!*" whistled Rupert, "I fear me the rod's in pickle, my son. Headmaster to see you in his private room, you know. Gad, how I remember the feeling! And I've not got over it yet, when I have any little hatchments of wild oats the old man doesn't know about. Deuced sorry for you, dear fellow! Off you go! Good luck!"

If John had been able to make little of Rupert, still less information did he gain from his father. Small love as there had been between father and son in the past, John had been wholly unprepared for Gregory Glendonwyn's present attitude.

"You admit that you have been making love to the girl, here in the parish which was so soon to be your own. You tell me plumply that it was for her sake that you spent your Christmas holidays teaching in that two-penny-ha'-penny dame's school at Kilgour you are so fond of. You have systematically, according to your own showing, kept up a correspondence with the young woman during your absence in Edinburgh,—the elder girl being privy to your intrigue.

"These things being so, some scandal like the present comes about as surely as the sowing of hemp-seed produces hemp. You were not out of Edinburgh you say. You are able to prove the fact. Then prove it. For myself I have nothing whatever to do with the final misadventure. Only I advise you if you wish to obtain a quiet settlement in your parish, to explain yourself in a way that there is no mistaking to Dr. Cæsar and his daughter Veronica."

"Then you do not believe me, father?" said John, standing rigid and angry opposite his father's chair, "*their* father did!"

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"Whose father?" said Gregory Glendonwyn throwing back his head haughtily.

"The father of Kate and Fairlie Glendinning" answered John with a whitening and distending nostril.

"Ah," said Gregory, smiling sarcastically, "but you see, my boy, *I* have studied you from youth, and then the man you refer to is an ignorant country joiner, even if we suppose that his loudly expressed anxiety for his daughters is genuine. On the other hand I am your father, a magistrate, and accustomed to weigh evidence."

"Then you do not believe me, sir?" John repeated, in a stifled voice.

"Frankly, I do not!"

"Then, sir," said John, "I bid you good-bye. I shall never come willingly into your presence again. I care not whether I receive the parish or not. You yourself have placed the greatest barrier in the way of that ever being my lot in life. But, thank God, I have still my integrity, my youth, and the portion left to me by my mother. As to the last, I have not claimed it during the last two years, but I shall ask my lawyer to write to yours that the details of the final settlement may be arranged between us."

John did not say this in the least by way of threat. Nothing was further from his thoughts—nevertheless the change which these simple words produced on his father's countenance was marvellous. His voice, at first clear and resonant in denunciation of his younger son, cold and icy in the rejection of his final appeal, became suddenly hoarse.

"No—no," he cried, "your mother's portion is due to you on the day when you are presented to the parish of Gower and settled as the ordained minister thereof. Till then principal and interest both remain in my hands."

"I think not," said John. "Both my mother's mar-

riage settlement and her will make it perfectly clear that her fortune is mine from my twenty-first birthday. I was at the trouble to obtain a copy of the last-named, and submit it to Mr. McCrosty, who corroborated it from the deeds in his hands with regard to the marriage settlement; besides which I asked for and obtained a copy of that also in so far as it concerned myself."

"Then you took an infamous liberty, sir," cried his father, furiously.

"Mr. McCrosty did not seem to think so, sir," said John now grown suddenly calm with the chill fighting spirit which came to him at such times, "and when I am bidding you what may be a last farewell, let me assure you, sir, that Veronica Cæsar and I have never had the least intention of marrying. She would not marry me on any terms. I have no desire to marry her. So years ago we mutually agreed that we would remain friends—nothing more!"

"And does Dr. Cæsar know of this?" gasped Gregory, "Is your father the only person left in the dark among all these plots and stratagems?"

"That I do not know," answered his son, "Veronica and I, in agreeing to be friends, left each other free to inform the members of our several houses as necessity should arise."

Then as these two continued to face each other in the library with the usual country gentleman's books looking down from the shelves about them—"Strutt's Rural Pastimes," "Tom and Jerry," "Youatt on the Horse," "Culpepper's Herbal," "The Complete Gentleman," several volumes of "Bell's Life" and a "Dictionary of Farriery,"—the attitude of Gregory Glendonwyn towards his son seemed to undergo a further remarkable change.

The lines of that hard face quivered, yet it did not seem to be with love. Rather a kind of fear looked

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out of the chilly eyes. A cold sweat had broken over his greyish face, on which a fleck of brilliant green from a painted window lay clearly like a scar. Nevertheless Gregory Glendonwyn smiled upon his second son and held out his hand.

"John," he said, "I do believe you. I was only trying you—perhaps too hard and too high. Why should not you and I be friends? There are but Rupert, you, and I left of the Glendonwyns. Why should not the three of us keep the peace?"

The lad's heart leaped within him, yet not altogether with trust. He knew his father for a hard but honourable man. But he had never heard him speak thus before. To the sensitive ear of youth there was a chord somewhere that did not ring wholly true.

Still he could not resist that appeal. His heart was too simple, too eager, too natural, and he stretched out his hand to meet his father's gladly enough.

"I for one am willing," he said. "You will find me always for peace. I am glad that you believe my statement."

"I do, my boy," said Gregory, "and for the rest I will see Dr. Cæsar at once as to the date of your induction into the parish. There is no need to put it off. It is high time that we had a strong man among us, at once able to speak his mind and well-affected to the Government—a man who can be trusted by personal character and connections to take a strong line—politically, I mean. Little penny-whistle Aiblin is provided for now, or all but. When these things are arranged we can have that little settlement I spoke about. As to what you tell me about Veronica Cæsar, you had better leave me to deal with the girl's father. Though there is every reason why, for other reasons, you should lose no time in presenting yourself to the lady herself. She has, I understand, great influence with Dr. Cæsar."

His father watched John depart with a calm countenance, nodding to him pleasantly as he closed the door. But immediately the door was shut, an astonishing change came over the old man's face.

"So," he muttered between his clenched teeth, "you are working against me, are you? You are sniffing to find out—well, two can play the game. Rupert has nearly ruined me. And you, my dear good son John, comfort of my old age, staff of my declining years—you and none other shall help your old father to re-establish himself—or he will know the reason why."

XII

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT WITH PROMISE

IN one respect John lost no time in carrying out his father's wishes. He set off that very afternoon to see Veronica Cæsar. There had always been a special sense of comradeship between him and the girl. Her large, certain grasp of any topic, her vivid and vigorous personality and somewhat ironic speech, were more like those of a man. Yet there was a certain salt of lively wilfulness and irresponsibility about her that was altogether feminine and charming.

She liked John Glendonwyn more than she dared own even to herself, and John, like a true man, consciously or unconsciously traded upon the fact.

On this occasion Veronica was busy and he did not see her at once. Among other things it was her duty to prepare half-a-dozen brothers and sisters—noisy, rackety, knickerbockered, curt-skirted, and assorted in various combinations of twinship and friendship, for their afternoon walk. In itself this was a heavy enough task, but Vera Cæsar—tall, athletic, and not to be trifled with—made very light of it. With the air of a commander-in-chief she ordered toys to be put away in certain deep cupboards which looked like the rubbish heap of a hospital where they had a large surgical practice.

"You Tom, come out from beneath that table and stop teasing Angelica! There—what did I tell you? You have made her cry. Take that for yourself—and see how you like it! It's not half what you gave the bairn, you ill-set deil's brat. Stand still while I'm

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combing your hair! If you don't want the comb to rake your thatch out by the handful, that is. It's no business of mine, dear boy! There again, what did I tell you? Be good enough to stand still now and hold your noise."

All the while she was darting, alert, ready for all emergencies, a child in one hand, a brush in the other, upon this current iniquity and that. A shrill chorus of "Vera's" and "Vera dee-ar's" accompanied her passage. Hands were outstretched to intercept her. Piteous appeals were made for assistance with some crucial button or stubborn shoe-tag. Yet without the least trace of haste, the young woman distributed encouragement and reproof. Her mouth was full at once of chidings and safety pins. As soon as one more of the regiment completed his marching kit, Veronica proceeded to turn the finished article out upon the landing, with the direst threats of post-mortem vengeance in case of tousled hair or dirtied pinafore.

Alone in the drawing-room sat Mrs. Doctor Augustus Cæsar, languid of body, afflicted with chronic "creeps," "dizzinesses," "dwalms," "overcomings," "palpitations," indeed all the weaknesses the spirit of woman is heir to (which yet leave no mark upon the robustiousness of the flesh and fleshly appetite). The lady was large and voluble. Her ample person shook chronically like ill-made blanc-mange. The spectator, who came upon her on a hot day quivering (as it seemed) towards speedy dissolution, experienced a new terror. She ate inordinately, and had to be supported to the sofa immediately afterwards owing to the weak state of her health. She was a martyr to indigestion, and fainted at the idea of taking a walk in the garden or performing the least domestic duty.

But to make up for all, she owned a tongue into which all the superabundant nourishment of her dietary appeared to find its way. With this unruly

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organ she ruled her husband, made herself the hatred of the few overworked domestics and the aversion of her own children, who were accustomed to crawl past the drawing-room as if it had been the lair of a tigress. Only Veronica feared her not—with the obvious consequent that Mrs. Doctor Cæsar feared her daughter, and behind her back, spake much evil of her.

To this lady John had, in the absence of Veronica, been introduced as she sat with the very silliest of last year's novels out of the town circulating library on her knee.

She lifted up her hands at sight of him.

"John Glendonwyn," she cried, "I am surprised that you have the face to appear among decent people, sir. You have broken my poor girl's heart. Is not that enough without brazening it out? She has not had the spirit of a worm ever since the villainess of your conduct was broken to her. She cannot even bear to answer me, her own mother, when I speak to her about it, but goes instantly out of the room, I doubt not to weep somewhere in secret. But you will suffer for this—aye, bitterly! Heaven will reckon with you and my husband, sir,—yes, my husband will have something to say! I have spoken to him and you will not find him so forgiving as poor, wronged, innocent, trusting girls like my dear Veronica—whose heart you first won when you were both in long frocks, and which you have now broken,—yes and trampled under your feet. And all for the sake of what?—For the sake of a pair of gipsies that should be whipped at the cart-tail through the streets! Aye, and would be if I had my way. I said so only yesterday to my husband. My father, the provost of Kilpatrick Juxta, has seen that done in the year—no matter in what year, sir! And I would have all such bold, bad women whipped. How would you like that, sir? I have no patience with you—none, sir. My hus-

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band will speak with you. Ring the bell for my husband. Augustus—Veronica—will you calmly see your poor mother insulted, yes, insulted——”

“What can be the matter, mamma?” said Veronica, suddenly opening the drawing-room door with a half-attired young gentleman of six held firmly by the arm in one hand, and in the other the large falling collar which she was about to affix with a pin to his jacket. The pin with which she meant to conclude the negotiation was held in her lips as she spoke. A little thing like that never prevented Veronica Cæsar from either action or speech.

Mrs. Doctor Augustus cast up her hands more piteously than before.

“Oh, my poor girl—my poor, poor, deceived, despised child!” she cried. “Behold—prepare yourself! Here is the monster, come to insult us, yes, on purpose to gloat over the ruin he has made!”

“Now, mamma (keep quiet, Bobby, or I will knock the head off you!)—what in the world are you talking about now, mamma? Oh, John—I am glad to see you! Come and speak to me when I have got the nurse out of the house with these young Ashdodites. And you, mother, be good enough to let John and me settle our own affairs. I told you plainly what would happen last night if you did not. I will go to poor Aunt Fisher, and ask her to let me help in the laundry. You know whether she will be glad of me or not. Then you can undertake the management of this household, which you think I look after so badly. Come along, Bobby. You will find me in the nursery, John. Now, mamma, remember what I told you!”

And the energetic young lady vanished, adjusting the Eton collar as she marched her prey upstairs—whereupon at the opening and shutting of a door the sound of civil strife ceased and there was a great calm.

John, who during all this had not spoken one soli-

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tary word, stood uncertainly with his hat in his hand, looking with alarm upon the contorted countenance of Mrs. Doctor Cæsar. At Veronica's departure that lady had fallen back on her sofa, much as an erected bolster subsides when smitten in the middle. Now she lay back feebly wagging her hands and calling variously "Water! Water! My vinaigrette! Augustus!" so that John, to whom these symptoms were new, became seriously alarmed for her safety.

Accordingly the young man filled a glass of water and held it to her lips. He dabbled her large, florid face with Cologne water. He held a small decanterful of smelling salts to the lady's nostrils, and in a little had the satisfaction of finding her come to herself. This she did with much parade of preliminary gasps and cluckings, produced from her throat and windpipe after the fashion of a ventriloquist. She turned her head vaguely from side to side, gazing all the while at the wall-paper as if she had never seen it before. Then quite without warning she sat up on her elbow and waved John and his restoratives away.

"Where am I? What have I been saying? Some folly, I fear me. Dear John, if in my paroxysms I have said or done anything to hurt your feelings, I pray you pardon a dying woman—a heart-broken woman—a woman who has suffered in her family more ill-treatment and ingratitude than falls to the lot of a score of women. You have seen me in the dreadful grasp of one of these attacks which are despised, made light of by my own daughter—nay, too often by my husband also. Oh, I would not say a word against dear Augustus. He is a man of many affairs, but Veronica—it hurts me even to speak the name—oh, sir, have you ever known what it is to be a mother—to have cherished in your bosom the serpent that bit you? No, of course not—you, too, are a man, and cannot feel for a woman and a mother. Yet were I to

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reveal to you—yes, even to you, one-tenth of the misery, the hapless hopeless misery, the insults, the slights, the absolute and fiendish tortures that have been inflicted on me in this my own house—even you would shudder and turn pale. Oh sir, my boy, my son (I must call you so)—I feel that you have always been in sympathy with me. You have ever been kind. Never have I permitted any one to speak a word against you in my presence. Oh it is coming again, I feel it!—My smelling salts—Water!—A little drop of—of that third phial—my medicine—Ah! A-h-h-!”

John poured out the “medicine”—which when decanted had an odour of—of a certain specific remedy largely used in Scotland—and so succeeded in warding off the threatened attack.

Then being somewhat recovered, Mrs. Augustus Cæsar beckoned him mysteriously near with one fat forefinger. She nodded her head at him, and looked so mysterious that John instinctively took hold of the decanter, prepared at the first symptom of collapse to empty it all over the front of her expansive toilet.

“John,” she whispered, “listen. There is a plot against you also. It is (heart-sick am I to reveal it to you!) my own daughter who is at the bottom of it. She is jealous (or rather was) of that pretty little teacher girl at the Academy. I have often seen her passing the window. And to offend Veronica—oh, how dangerous that is only I can bear witness, as I shall in my poor weak body to my dying day! She it is who has spirited these young persons away and has tried to throw the blame on you. But not a word—not a word of this to Veronica! She would kill me if she thought I had hinted as much to you!

“And one thing more—they silence me! They keep my best and truest friends from me. They cast up my helplessness to me continually. But I, poor Rachel weeping, not for dead but for ungrateful children, have

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one argument left that will confute them. One resource that will put an end to all flouts and jeers for ever. In the midst of their unbelief and hardness of heart, one day (and it will not be long!) I shall lay me down and die. Yes, I cannot stand these tortures much longer. I shall die, and *then* they will be satisfied, I hope. Augustus, who pretends to be fond of me, will be rid of a burden. He can marry again. I hope he will be happier. And Veronica, that serpent, will have the satisfaction of having stung to death the mother that bore her. Ungrateful and rebellious child, I hope—oh, *how* fervently I hope, that she will be happy as she deserves!"

And with a cry of "Enough! Enough!" (a cry which the reader of these all too faithful memorials will doubtless echo) she waved John Glendonwyn out of the room with a gesture truly dramatic.

As the girl had said, he found Vera Cæsar putting away the débris of the late general engagement in the nursery. Martha, the single domestic other than the cook who was "kept" at the Manse of Kilgour, had been despatched down the road in charge of "Cæsar's army" as they were called throughout the district. It was their eldest sister's pride to turn them out spick and span each day, though the task often took her not only all the morning but much of the night as well—as with needle and darning-clew she made good the ravages of bramble and hedge, dyke, ditch, and muddy road.

"I fear you have found mother more than ordinarily trying this morning," Veronica began cheerfully, without any other greeting. She was sorting out a pile of socks into "clean" and "dirty," and those again into a "holed" and "whole." "I slept (or rather lay) in her room last night to give my father one good quiet night. And, strangely enough, mother is always a little restive after a night of my society."

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"She certainly talked rather wildly," admitted John, "and once or twice seemed so ill that she quite frightened me!"

Veronica's lips, finely designed and lying upon each other with the large ease of those of Athéne Parthénos, were compressed a little more as John spoke. The pupils of her large, widely-separated grey eyes contracted and expanded as if they had been under the control of her will, but she made no direct answer.

"Has she been abusing you or me?" she inquired, without the shadow of a smile.

"Both!" said John, equally gravely.

"Ah!" sighed Veronica, as she threw a perfectly hopeless sock into the "footing" bag. "It is seldom that we are included in one anathema. But perhaps there was a fainting fit between."

John looked surprised and a little shocked.

"Yes, I know," added Veronica, proceeding to fold and put away the children's Sunday clothes with a swift regularity of movement almost mechanical, "but you see I am two-and-twenty years of age. When I was ten I found my mother out. Could any child's reverence have survived such an upbringing? I wonder I am not in very truth the perfect tyrant and heartless wretch she tells everyone I am. Perhaps in some ways she is right. But think how many things I have borne in silence, and how much I know. I don't think that such extenuating circumstances as these are quite adequately provided for in the First Commandment with promise."

"There is no one in the world so kind as you, Vera," said John soothingly. "You work harder than a whole staff of servants! You are a score of nurses all in one—besides being governess, tutor, sewing-woman, housekeeper——"

"I am the daughter of a house without a head," said Veronica, without looking up a moment from her

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work. "What I do is purely selfish—perhaps done to quiet my conscience—that I may render with my hands the honour and service which my heart and my lips refuse!"

"I would give the world if I could help you, Vera!" said John, looking down at her with a great pity in his heart.

The girl looked up with a single swift glance of pain, then as quickly dropped her eyes upon her work again, and went on mechanically as before.

"You?" she cried, with a little laugh, salt and bitter to hear.

Then, a milder look coming gradually into the wide grey eyes, she added, "Ah, my boy, you have your own troubles, I know, and I am sorry. I did wrong to be angry with you when you came here last time. That again was my selfishness!"

"They have been telling you tales to my discredit, I hear," said John, "you have been told that I—that I——"

He paused, for the words which ought to have come next, seemed to choke him.

"I have been told what I never for a moment believed," said the girl lightly. "I laughed at those who maligned you. Laddie, I have spoken many edged words to you, but all the more for that I am your friend. I never loved you or any man as a woman ought to love him whom she is trusted to marry. But do you think that in all these years I have not seen to the bottom of you,—aye, as if you were made of clear glass?"

"You mean that I am shallow, Vera?" said John, bending down his head.

"Ah, there you are," she was smiling now, "your touchy self-esteem goes off with a hair trigger. No, you are not shallow. I think there are depths in you

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which no one has ever fathomed but me—no, not even your little Fairlie!”

“You have heard about her—what does it mean?” said John, grateful for even so dubious a word of encouragement.

“That I have no guess at,” she answered,—“at least not more than a guess so remote and faint that I dare not put it into words even to myself. But, let this abide in your soul, John. Dark things may come to light. Things painful assuredly will. But they shall not stain little Fairlie any more than the breath I breathe on this mirror. Look—it is gone!”

John was immensely touched. His heart bounded with gratitude. “Vera!” he cried impulsively, catching the girl in his arms, “you are the noblest woman God ever made.”

He would have kissed her on the lips, and for a single quivering moment the girl stood motionless as if she might have permitted him. Then very coldly she shook herself free and turned away.

“No, John,” she spoke slowly and distinctly, keeping her back to him and going on all the time with her polishing of the furniture, “I am not noble or self-sacrificing, or indeed anything adjectival. Do not run the vocabulary through a sieve on my account, that you may have all the big words to throw at me. I can gauge myself pretty well. I was teaching fractions to-day to the children, and I can reduce myself to a common denominator as well as your little Fairlie. Only I happen not to mind work, and to the average mind that covers a multitude of sins. It is, however, after all, the most bourgeois of the virtues.”

“And so it ought,” cried John, not heeding her last phrase. “I have been a lazy dog, but I will not remain so one hour longer. What I see you doing from day to day and all day long, that I also will do!”

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"About an hour at a time once in two or three months, John!" put in Veronica, cool and slow as the dropping of icewater in a cave.

"Well, at any rate, I do see it whenever I come here," said John, too keen upon his point to be drawn aside, "and what you are doing is noble. I do not care what you say. One far greater than either of us, settled that. 'Whoso careth not for his own and especially for those of his own house, hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel!'"

"Well," said Veronica, with a curious expression, "it is doubtless very comforting to have Scripture quoted to back a friend's good opinion. But all the same it was little Fairlie that you fell in love with, you know. And, heaven knows, small blame to you! If I had been a man, so should I."

"But, Vera," said John, stammering with confusion at the personal turn the conversation was taking, "you know you would not let me. You never cared a brass farthing for me, except to lecture and to tease. And you can do that now as much as ever. As for me, you know that I love you and honour you more than any one in all the world. You have always been my world—my friend—mother—sister, indeed all my universe——"?

"*Except?*" queried Veronica quietly snipping a thread between her small even teeth.

"Well," stammered John, "except what you would not let me be!"

"It is certainly most comforting!" said Veronica Caesar, sweetly. And she rose, holding out a hand to her sometime *fiancé*.

"Well, John, 'All Your Universe—Except' has her father's lunch to take up to him—good-bye!" she said. And so departed.

XIII

ORDINATION

AS may well be supposed, John had much on his mind during these days of suspense. He rode his horse everywhere, questioned, cross-questioned, followed false clues till they tailed off into nothing or ended in absolute *culs-de-sac*. But nothing came of it. The girls had, so far as their friends' knowledge was concerned, absolutely disappeared. Yet old David Glendinning would have no communication made to the authorities. There were the letters. There was the fact plain and indubitable, that the girls had gone away of their own free wills. There was the door open for them—whenever they were ready to return. Neither was their father's heart bitter against them. He took no account of anything. He would stick at nothing. He was their father and he would love them to the end.

"If only I could tell them sae—I wad be happy," he said, "but I'm thinkin' they ken it—mair especially Fairlie."

For old David, with all his follies and extravagances, and too often also the intolerance and bigotry of his judgments, had yet this root of the matter in him. He stood on the top of the watchtower with the fatted calf bleating in the woodyard beneath, and he looked across that great and terrible wilderness on the other side of which are the Sins of Crimson and Scarlet, pleasures like to the purple of Tyre, with mighty famines and swine-troughs and prodigals, returning

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and unreturning. He stood there and waited, his hand shading his eyes, as he looked into the distance.

All the same it was a weary time for all concerned. Meantime Rupert's foot grew quickly better, and he plunged more and more deeply into such dissipations as the country and the neighbouring towns afforded. His father seemed to leave him greatly to himself, pursuing him indeed with grudging eyes when he rode away, and perambulating the grounds as evening fell that he might watch for his return, but not interfering overtly by word or look with his outgoings or incomings.

Upon his brother Rupert expended only the small change of flouts and jeers. The two never met without the elder inquiring if his brother had yet laid salt to the tail of the vanished ones, or by alternative pretending to admire the cleverness with which Parson John had hidden the game away.

Occasionally Rupert would be a couple of days from home, and once it was the afternoon of the third day before he returned. On this occasion Gregory Glendonwyn had grown ever more fretfully anxious. He could not stay indoors, but with a gun over his shoulder, though it was the middle of July, haunted the edges of the plantations and the rugged points from which he could obtain a view of the various roads leading west and north from Castle Gower.

To John, however, his manner was completely altered. He was now unweariedly kind to his younger son, and his influence together with Dr. Augustus Cæsar's good offices, soon smoothed all difficulties out of the way of John's settlement. The day of the ordination was fixed and John engaged with what zeal he could muster in the preparation of his trial discourses.

It was Doctor Cæsar, for the time being Moderator of the Presbytery of Kilgour, who fixed the subjects,

and added unofficially after the benediction, "There are some thirteen barrels of sermons in the garret at home, John, and if there is anything there that can be of use to you, ye are most welcome to it. I will not uphold the doctrine but the reproof is above suspicion."

The night before the ordination Gregory Glendonwyn sent for his younger son to his study, and upon his entrance invited him to take a chair.

"I have an hard thing to open to you, John," he said. "It is difficult at any time for a father to humble himself to his offspring—peculiarly hard in my case, in that I am conscious that many times and for long periods I have been far from doing you justice."

"If ever that has been so, father," said John with simplicity, "I have forgotten it."

The proud old man silently bowed his head, and then relapsed into so prolonged and vacant a silence that John watched him with some anxiety.

"The matter is this," he said at length. "You said when last we spoke together, that when you entered upon the living which I have taken some pains to secure and keep open for you, you would expect me to make count and reckoning with you for your mother's fortune, principal and interest. Now I do not conceal from you that this, though not, of course, impossible, would at the present moment be exceedingly embarrassing to me. You will remember that the care and handling of the money was left entirely to me. I had full power to employ it as I thought best. Now, a few months ago, there came a sudden and overwhelming call upon me—a call which required to be met at once, if the honour of our house was to be preserved. At the moment there was only one fund upon which I could draw.

"I admit that I sunk a portion of that fortune which should have been yours to avert the threatened disgrace—your disgrace as well as mine. Now, what I

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ask of you is that you should allow the money which I have expended to remain as a first charge upon the estate. I am advised that such a course is perfectly legal. You will receive your income as certainly and at as high an interest as on any other security, and you will have the satisfaction of having lifted a great load of sorrow from your father's heart."

John Glendonwyn, without a moment's hesitation, took his father's hand.

"Agreed!" he said, heartily, "I will do all you wish in the matter. I have neither wish nor need to take the capital of my mother's fortune out of your hands. And as to the interest—that shall be as is most convenient for you!"

"The deeds are here," said his father, mindful of the motto which advises striking before the cooling of the iron, "Mr. McCrosty has drawn them up. The matter has his approval and sanction. I assure you there is nothing unfair or underhand in the arrangement. Shall I ring the bell for Grierson and Faithful to witness the papers between us? There are duplicate agreements which shall remain, the one in your possession and the other in mine."

At the conclusion, as Grierson went out and John Glendonwyn was putting his signature to the document, Rupert entered and the slightest glance of intelligence passed between him and his father—a lift of the eyebrows, an inclination of the head—question asked and answered, with a simple-hearted third party busily signing papers and no whit the wiser.

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The ordination passed over without any hitch. All went smoothly. There had indeed never been any trouble in Gower on that score. Every farmer held his land directly off the laird. Every farm-servant was feudal so far as his master was concerned. Only

a stray cottager or two, stranded upon the remnant of old freeholds long lapsed or dwindled into a mere house-feu and kailyard, dared call his soul his own. Of these petty lairdships the largest and most important was the little croft of David Glendinning.

There was however one significant and jarring note in the proceedings of the day. At the close of the solemn ordination service, when the assembled Presbytery was shaking hands with the newly-ordained minister of the Kirk of Scotland, now their friend and brother, two white-haired old men belonging to the congregation, Adam Gilchrist of Arbigland and Ephraim Grey of Chryston, came forward. The first named held a paper in his hand which he asked permission of the reverend Presbytery to read.

"Some high-flying nonsense about Non-intrusion," murmured Gregory Glendonwyn, who knew the men. But Dr. Cæsar on his own ground of the Church Courts feared no man alive, and courteously made way for the two delegates to ascend to the little fenced square of the Elders' Seat round which the Presbytery were grouped.

"We will gladly hear you on any matter touching the justice or legality of the action upon which we are engaged," he said.

Then Adam Gilchrist, in the name of those who had signed the paper and adhered to him, declared that while protesting against the right of any man to present another to the charge of a congregation of Christian people, they wished to add that they had no objection of any sort to the young man who had this day been settled among them. The signatories desired only that the trumpet should not be blown with any uncertain sound, and they would willingly support their minister in all that concerned the good of the parish, the welfare of the Kirk of Scotland, and the faithful preaching of the Gospel."

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Then he put the paper in John's hands.

Dr. Cæsar smiled somewhat dubiously, but said nothing. In his opinion it was no time for polemics. But it was remarked that one or two of the Presbytery smiled rather "wershly," as if the savour of the protest did not altogether please them.

This was one of the all too numerous signs that it was blowing up for the storm, and though the Presbytery of Gower was, by a very large majority, Moderate in its opinions and policy, there were men in certain of its constituent parishes who would not either be intimidated or silenced.

On the Sabbath which followed the day of ordination, Dr. Augustus Cæsar preached in the Parish of Gower, and according to the ancient kindly custom introduced his young friend John Glendonwyn to the people. His daughter accompanied him, his wife being of course too delicate to bear the fatigue. So it chanced that during the service of Introduction, John and Veronica sat side by side in the manse seat—an event which was universally held to have in it something notably prophetic.

"Ah, he's a fine young man," said old Marget Watson of Pitfirren to her cronies, seated as it were on the bed of justice outside her cottage door. "And sae, I doot na, thinks the Doctor's dochter, a braw lad and a braw steepend and the braw pickle siller his mither left him. No to speak o' the hale property o' Castle Gower—wast o' the Gower Water to the Black Isle and the hale glen richt up to the tap o' Cairnsmore—that is, if that young heir keeps on in the road he is gaun—*his* race wull no be lang—what say ye, kimmers? Fegs, no!"

And the "kimmers," fingering their knitting and laying out their "white seams" with their thumbs, said that nothing was more likely, and that if any man in the world knew what he was about, it was Dr.

Augustus Cæsar of the parish of Kilgour. Moreover a wondersome lucky lass was Mistress Veronica his daughter, and "likely to do better than a bairn wi' siccan a heathen ungodly name had ony richt to expect."

That night John slept in his own manse. There was little furniture in it, for his father, though most kindly affected to him and full of promises, had as yet paid him no portion of the arrears of his little fortune. Moreover he could hope to receive no stipend for a considerable time. So a kitchen with its necessary utensils, a little bedroom for Babby Lockhart his old nurse (who, against all advice, had insisted on coming to the manse to "attend on her bairn, noo he had grown into a braw minister o' the Gospel") a bedroom for himself furnished with wash-stand and camp-bed, a study in which Will Glendinning had put up some bookshelves and a plain kitchen table of deal to write his sermons on, formed all the furnished rooms which Gower Manse was destined to contain for many a day. The packing boxes in which John's books arrived from Edinburgh were pressed for service as additional seats, to one of which the young minister helped himself whenever he had a visitor.

His father had indeed offered him a complete "plenishing" from the wide chambers of Castle Gower, but John was firm in the faith of "doing for himself" and felt happier as he lay down that night in his bare apartment with the stars blinking in through the blindless window than he had been since the strange disappearance of little Fairlie and her sister Kate.

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John Glendonwyn did not begin his ministry with any remarkable manifestation of power, but he gradually gave proof of a conscientious readiness to do the best that in him lay for his people. His pulpit

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work was accounted excellent and profitable from the first.

Frankly acknowledging his inexperience to his congregation, he began to restudy with them the plain Gospel teachings in a series of discourses which was long memorable in Gower. These might be denominated direct searchings for the word of truth, and to a congregation sated with half-held platitudes and specious commonplaces their new minister's earnest, eager, strenuous reachings out after higher things came almost with the force of a revelation.

Not of course to all—for the dull ploughman, weary with his work of the week, gazed a few minutes open-mouthed to see any one "in a passion on the Sabbath" and then in a little subsided into his wonted drowse. But the richer farmers gaped at John with unfeigned astonishment. It seemed to them dangerously near the Abomination of Desolation called Enthusiasm and they wondered how his father could sit there and listen to him. One would think to hear the laddie that wisdom had never been heard tell of before he left the college of Edinburgh.

But there were serious folk in the parish of Gower as there are in every parish in Scotland—men and women humble of heart and apt to be instructed. To such John spoke directly, never setting himself up to know more than he did, nor yet making of his crude ideas forcemeat balls to thrust down other peoples' throats, as the manner of some is, but rather as a fellow-disciple, sitting on the same bench of instruction with them, or staff in hand and scarce a step in advance, leading them up the Hill Difficulty.

In this fashion John Glendonwyn slowly won a folk for himself in the parish of Gower. Nor was it only on Sabbaths that he did his work. Soon there was not one hearth from north to south where he was not welcome. His simple kindness and sympathy took

them by the heart coming from one so young. "Grave beyond his years" they called him. But those sparklings of humour, too, were not wanting, without which no man is fitted to be a minister. A sweet gravity, tender and pensive, was the note of John Glendonwyn's early ministry in Gower, and the days when he exercised it are still unforgotten upon Solway side.

"No an easy man to turn," said one of his heritors.

"I wad like to see him mair blythesome," said an elder. "To my mind he is ower sober for so young a man."

But when these praiseful commentings came to his ears the young minister was both abashed and ashamed, knowing that his gravity was but the burden of care which he carried since the disappearance of Kate and Fairlie Glendenning, together with the knowledge that his brother was in some way privy to the matter.

During all this time John went little to Castle Gower, but his father came over often and sat in the single arm-chair, staring in the long gaps of silence at the carpetless floor of the study. He did not, however, again repeat his offer of furnishing the manse, nor had he paid any of the interest due to John on his mother's property.

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XIV

THE CLOUD-BREAKING

[Being John Glendonwyn's First Narrative.]

[At this point the narrative as given by the first narrator, which the editor has hitherto founded upon, now approaches an event so strange in itself, and so far-reaching in its consequences that he has evidently taken more than ordinary pains to obtain his facts correctly and in an exact form. More than one original narrative is appended to the history connected with the events of this period, and in particular John Glendonwyn himself has been induced to tell the story of the night of the 18th November, 1842, in his own words.]

I AM asked in the interests of those who shall come after me, to put on record all that I know of the grievous and terrible events of that evening ever memorable to me, and I trust not to be forgotten by my descendants, the darkening of the day of November the 18th of the year 1842.

It was well-nigh six months since that other day when, in the city of Edinburgh I had been informed of the complete disappearance of my dear Fairlie Glendinning, together with that of her sister Kate, whose fate seemed to be mixed with hers in a common mystery.

During those months I judge that no young man within the four seas had grown older more quickly than I. A minister newly placed, with an earnest de-

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sire to prove himself no hireling, must needs age rapidly during the first months of his pastorate—I more than most. For in those lonely days and nights it was first revealed to me that I possessed a soul in touch with things without the world and beyond the stars.

Indeed God was busy with me in these days and I went about my business with an unseen hand heavy on my spirit.

But on the Sabbath day, being the 17th of November, my soul seemed at last to have broken its way out into a peace to which it had long been a stranger. Walking as my custom was in the kirkyard in the early morning, I watched the sun rise out of a black bank of clouds, which, however, presently dispersed and vanished, leaving the blonde stubble fields white with early rime, the turnips paled a little from their deep sea-green, and such an indescribable crisp luxury of breathing in the air that I gave thanks to God, and took courage. It had been a late harvest in Gower, and the winter delayed its coming. The leaves were yet fresh on the trees, and on warm afternoons the birds sang as blithely as if it had been the front of May instead of mid-November.

I had chosen for my text that day the words of the psalmist, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." And for the first time in the parish of Gower I spoke without written note. I had done so before in a college debating society, but this was the first time I had attempted it in my own pulpit.

It was strange to me, ignorant as yet that in the smallest degree I possessed that gift of speech which moves folks' hearts, to observe the hush which fell on the congregation, to mark how, slowly and all unknown to themselves they bent forward in their seats, and how as often as the speaker paused, they leaned back with a strange, universal sigh which was to me as unexpected as it was memorable and impressive.

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I would not delay to set down those feelings which relate to a time long past, were it not that I rejoice to recall how already in the days which preluded the storm-breaking, I had begun to win to me the hearts of my people.

It was at that time my custom after the morning service to spend the afternoon in quiet, and in the evening to hold a service in some outlying farm on Solway side or bedded out on the purpling edges of the moorlands—for the satisfaction of such infirm and aged as were ill-able to come all the way to the Kirk of Gower, which indeed is set down on a site very inconvenient to the bulk of the parishioners.

I had gone down into the vestry and was there setting my papers in order before going up to the manse (where, as I knew, old Babby Lockhart would be laying out a frugal meal) when I heard a knock come to the door—no infrequent occurrence in a Scots parish, in which there is generally some passing Samaritan urgent to pour oil into the wounds made by a man's own conscious failures.

But when I called, "Come in," it was to my great astonishment that the door opened and Duncan Grierson, our old butler at Castle Gower, entered with his well-accustomed gesture of salutation, a movement full at once of dignity and respect,

I held out my hand to him and he took it cordially. Then for a moment he did not speak in answer to my greeting, but stood holding my hand with a kind of questioning wonder on his face.

"Whence came ye?" he said, "surely never out o' the mirk pit o' the auld Glendonwyns. Or else with a great deliverance have these things been made plain to you from on high. Yince on a day hae I been feared that the auld black malignant blood was in ye, Maister John. I hae served the Glendonwyns five-and-fifty years, and seen ill day and guid day in the house of

Castle Gower; but never yet hae I seen a Glendonwyn that thoct His meditation sweet!"

I bade the old man sit down and tell me his errand at his leisure. Like all his kind, Grierson was given to enigmatical speech, and I admit that I had not thought much hitherto of his judgments, warnings, and prophesyings. Nor indeed did I now. Instead I asked him of my father and if he had sent any message to me. But Duncan only shook his head silently, and appeared to meditate on something that he could scarce bring himself to utter. At last with an obvious effort he took his courage in his hand and began:

"Maister John," he said, "things are sore wrong at Castle Gower."

"How then, Duncan," I said, "is my father worse in health, or is there a new quarrel betwixt him and Mr. Rupert?"

For indeed at that time I was never done thinking of my brother. He had been growing wilder and ever wilder. Many a night had I heard the galloping of his horse Bravo as he passed the manse, riding home from Drumfern or other of his haunts. He would send a view halloo up to my window if he saw a light, calling on me for a hypocritical dog to come down and drink with him a stirrup cup. Once or twice I did go down to speak with him, but to so little purpose that on one occasion he lashed me across the face with his riding whip, so that I carried the mark with me to the pulpit for three several Sabbath days.

I heard tales, too, as to his ongoin's in the parish which I thought it best to say nothing about at the time—a practice which I shall follow here, setting down only such things as are pertinent to the story and which can by no means be hidden, being a part of the common knowledge of all in whose midst these things happened.

"Maister Rupert," cried Duncan Grierson, growing

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instantly violently agitated—"na, there is nae quarrel betwixt Maister Rupert and the laird. I would to God there were—aye, even if it were to the shedding of blood."

"Sit down, Grierson, and tell me what you mean," I motioned to him with my hand, thinking to calm him.

"I cannot sit, sir," said the old man standing before me all trembling, "and that's God's truth as muckle as what ye preached to us this day frae the pulpit. But I couldna bide to see things gaun on at Castle Gower as they are doin' without speakin'. And the Lord wha sees the heart, pardon me gin I hae dune wrang."

"To be plain then, I think that there is a conspiracy between my Maister Gregory Glendonwyn and his son!—And, auld as I am and great sinner as I hae been, I canna stand still and see the innocent suffer for the guilty."

"The innocent suffering!" I cried, in great astonishment. "Conspiracy to do them wrong! What do you mean, Grierson? Surely you are not speaking of your master?"

"Deed am I that, sir,—even of Gregory Glendonwyn, whom I have served for fifty-five-year and never kenned to do the thing that was dishonourable. Hard he has aye been, hard wi' men, hard wi' the mither that brought ye into the world, and specially hard wi' you his son, that might have been to him for a pride and a glorying."

I judged from this that I knew what had happened. Grierson in some way had overheard a discussion about the fortune which my mother had left to me, and which (because he was pressed at the moment for money) my father had asked that I might permit him to retain, promising certain payments of interest that had not yet reached my hand. It is wonderful, as I

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well knew, how in a Scottish parish, any sough of un-trustworthiness in money dealings gets about.

"Ah, Grierson," said I, clapping him on the shoulder, "you were ever over partial to me. Do not be afraid. In the long run, my father will not do me an injustice."

But the old man held up his hands to stop me.

"No, no," he cried, "that I know also—or at least something of it. But if all the money in the world were at stake, it would not make this shame the less. It is the matter of the disappearance of the lasses, Kate and Fairlie Glendinning that I have come to you!"

I do not disguise it that I had to lay my hand on the window-sill to steady myself before I could take in his words, much less reply to them.

"Well—what of them?" I said at last. "Speak out, man, make haste!"

"Maister John," said Duncan Grierson, bending down his white head like a man ashamed and overcome, "I can bear it no longer. That's the fact. The nicht that they were lost it was my hand that yoked the horses. It was me that gied the letter intil the lassie's hand at the schule. It was me, Duncan Grierson, that trysted wi' Kate Glendinning ahint her ain faither's woodyaird—me, an auld man aboot to face his Maker, that am yet hard at it, doin' the deil's wark for the wages o' an hireling!"

"And where are the girls?" I cried, eagerly.

"Nay, that I ken no more than you—though I hae a guess," he answered, infinitely to my disappointment, "my wark was dune when I gaed the reins up into the hands o' him that was to drive them at the Cross Roads of Bennangour."

"And who drove?—Was it my brother?" I cried. "I never believed greatly in his lameness."

The old butler shook his head.

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"Into whose hands then? Tell me quickly!" I almost shouted.

"Into the hands of Gregory Glendonwyn, your father!" groaned the old butler and dropped into the chair which I had set for him at his first entering.

* * * * *

It was thus that I became aware of the strange domestic event which shapes all my history, which has caused me to write this for the information of the excellent man who at my request (and that of others of my family) has spent so much time in putting together the materials which myself and others have intrusted to him.

But to return to Duncan Grierson.

The old man sat and sobbed because of the breaking of his faith in the man who all his life long had been as an idol to him.

"God forgie me!" he moaned, "I kenned nae mair than the dead that go down to silence what I was doing. Saunders Greg the coachman had been sent awa' to Drumfern on some message for young Maister Rupert, and when the carriage was called for in a hurry, I bethocht me that it was some maitter o' doctors or medicine that was wanted sae prompt. For ye maun ken that Englishman Warner, the new Kilgour doctor is never oot o' the place. He is hand-fast wi' Maister Rupert and by accident is it were, I hae heard some gye queer talk atween him and the laird too.

"Then on the next day began the dirgie ower a' the paroch—'Maister John—him that was to be the minister, has wiled away Davvid Glendinnin's lass, and her sister has ga'en wi' her for company!' Then cam' the auld man himsel' to Castle Gower ready to break doon the auld waa's. But my maister Gregory ordered me to tak' him ben to the parlour whaur Mr. Rupert was lyin wi' the doctor busy attendin' him—

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and indeed this muckle is true, he hadna moved since the week afore.

"A' this time Maister Rupert had said but little, but whiles lauched and whiles wrote what letters the maister bade him—maist of them that I saw to a Miss Carslaw up about Greenock, a rich leddy that Gregory Glendonwyn was awfu' pressin' on Maister Rupert to mairry. Indeed I often heard them at it till far into the mornin'—their tongues *ding-dingin'* till every minute I expectit to hear the soond o' the candlesticks fleein' at Maister Rupert's heid. For your faither was ever a quick man in his temper and ill to withstand.

"But after yae nicht when Tammas Faithful and me waited ootside the door ready to gang in, thinkin' every minute that there wad be bluidshed atween them, there was nae mair word o' Miss Carslaw for a while. Maister Rupert gat his ankle-bane broken, and after that the man Warner was never oot o' the hoose—noo closeted wi' the laird and noo colloquin' wi' Maister Rupert in the parlour. The young man lay on his sofa and lauched maistly, as if a' the ill he had brocht on innocent lasses and on his ain hoose had been but as the cream o' a jest to him. Ah, it is as I kenned it wad be frae the beginning. An ill heart and a bonny face!—It's Guid's pity they should gang thegither! But if there's a deil in human form it's that braw Absolom o' a brither o' yours. And God forgie me for sayin' the like o' ony o' the hoose o' Glendonwyn, wha's guid wheaten bread I hae eaten for near-hand on to threescore years!

"Weel, Maister John, it wasna lang afore the laird and Maister Rupert and the doctor atween them had persuaded the auld man, Davvid Glendinning, dozened and stupid wi' grief as he was, that it could be nae ither than you that had rinned awa' wi' his lasses. They had a letter or twa o' yours that they had gotten I ken

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na where. But they had them, or made them, and sae they sent auld Davvid aff to Edinburgh to find ye, and by the time that he cam' back they had time to cover a' their tracks, sae that nane wad ken whaur the lasses had gane unto this day.

"The Laird hemsel' gaed awa' for three days. And when he cam' hame a weary man he was—aged and lookin' maist ready for the grave. But Maister Rupert, he never cared a jot. He had the barber-body ower frae Kilgour every day to shave him and dress his hair, as if for a ball. He couldna lippen me to do it—me that had shaved his faither near every day o' his life since he was a young sweerin' birkie gaun blythe to the wars. An' faith, I ken na but what he was i' the richt o't!—For if ever a man had the itchin' desire to cut anither man's throat, I, Duncan Grierson, had that wish every time I heard Maister Rupert laughin' to himsel' as he lay on his back wi' the rug ower his knee, blawin' his smoke, readin' his novéll, an' lauchin' clear and silvery as a burn ower granite gravel!—Lord—I declare it gied me the cauld grave-yaird creeps just to hear him—whiles wi' that saft-spoken, squint-eyed, Englishy doctor but mair aften by himsel'—lauchin', lauchin',—and a' the time the innocent sufferin' for his ill-done deeds, or maybes the green grass happit ower them by this time for ocht I kenned.

"But what I want ye to do is juist this—if so be ye will tak' the word o' an auld servant against your ain kith and kin. It's no natural that ye should, save and except that ye can see I hae naething to gain by leein' till ye.—Forbye that Duncan Grierson doesna look like a leein' man this day.

"After that bit service in the barn that I heard ye gie oot frae the pulpit (and the Lord aid ye wi' strength to gang through wi' it!) ye will be far awa' up on the muirland, and weel oot o' the kennin' o' the

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maist o' the pairish. Tak' your beast wi' ye, and when ye are aff the grund o' Ephraim Grey, turn your horse's heid and ride straight and canny for the change-hoose at the Ferry-o'-the-Slake. Rupert, your brither gaed awa' this mornin' early. Your faither rade aff yestreen, and I heard the yin tell the tither that they were to meet to set things finally to richts at the change-hoose o' the Corse o' Slakes. Sae it's your duty to be there, Maister John.

"And as for me, I waited till Maister Rupert followed this mornin' ridin' on Bravo, and syne cam' ower here to the kirk as I micht weel do without ony jaloosin' my errand. For dootless there's some ill-wishers will be on the watch for you, sir. And I ken this—that your faither's main fear is that you, Maister John, will get on the track o' the lasses.

"We must keep an eye upon John!' I heard Gregory Glendonwyn say to his son.

"But Rupert cries 'Nonsense—Sir Innocencio is all for his parish and good works now. We have nothing to fear from him!'

"Do not be so sure—John has more wit than you credit him with!' says the laird, shaking his head. For the matter is mightily serious to my master, I do assure you, sir.

"A fig for his wit!' answers Master Rupert, 'the cream of the thing is that it is his money will tide us over till—till—'

"Till I have put right what you put so far wrong, my poor foolish lad!' says my maister. And he looks fondly at him as he never did a' his life at you."

Now I own that it was hard for me to be told by a servant how my own father ever hated me and loved my brother, yet after the first nip, I minded it not long. For I had many things to do other than brooding upon the chilly affections of my kinsfolk, be they ever so coldrife.

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"Well, Grierson," I made answer, when I had heard him out, "I will go—come what will of it. And I shall demand to be told where the girls are. But I will not reveal the source of my information nor yet compromise you, old friend. Do not be afraid. I can bring them to book without that."

So, somewhat comforted, but far from reassured, Grierson took his way among the tombstones and so out upon the white road, leaving me to digest as best I might one of the strangest commentaries ever made upon a discourse preached from the text: "My meditation of Him shall be sweet."

And I wondered if David the Psalmist ever sang these words after the little matter of Uriah the Hittite. And, that being so, if the sweetness of the meditation were not in a moment made bitter by the thought of the man whom he had set in the forefront of the battle where it was hottest about Rabboth Ammon. So at least was it gall and wormwood to me to think that through me sorrow and shame had come to the house of David Glendinning.

And this haunted me like the burden of a song.

XV

ON THE CORSE OF SLAKES

[Being John Glendonwyn's narrative continued.]

OF the evening service, which, according to public advertisement I conducted that night in the Chryston Barn, there remains to me no more than a haze of faces, and the memory of a man speaking many words mechanically, the meaning of which he scarce knew. For I seemed to stand outside myself and to listen to Ephraim Grey leading off the psalm, quavering to the tune of Coleshills much as a malefactor on the scaffold hears and not hears the chaplain's passing prayer.

Similarly I went through with my duty in the present expectation of an event, the mere thought of which dominated all my soul.

I stood ready for the attempt when I rose to preach. For I had ridden my horse called Peden the Prophet over, and stabled him in the Chryston stables, where he was at the time luxuriating in his feed of corn and ruminating on jogging comfortably home with me to the manse, as unconscious of the long journey he had before him as his master had been that morning when among the gravestones in Gower Kirk-yard, he watched the sun rise out of the cloud of night. My good Peden got his first surprise at the green loan-end of Chryston, when, instead of giving him his head to trot comfortably down the glen, I pulled him sharply round in the direction of the moors, and struck into a

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mountain track which, being lonely and desolate I preferred to the high road for my present errand. Peden the Prophet, whom with the flippancy of youth I had so named, as much because of a predilection he had for rolling in mosshags as because he came from the parish of Glenluce, carried me steadily and truly enough after the sulkiness of his first surprise had worn off a little.

I had abundant time to bethink me of the mission I was going upon. Grierson had indeed told me many things—but how could I prove them upon Rupert and my father without compromising my informant? I could only breathe a prayer for guidance through the trial which was coming to me.

It was strange rough-shod riding over the face of the moorlands. As Peden picked his way among the water worn stones, Orion was beginning to slant up out of the east and the Pleiads wisped together in the zenith. I had many mingled thoughts of bitter and sweet—bitter of my father and brother who had set a snare for myself, and done injustice to Fairlie Glendinning. Yet when I thought of her, there came such a gush of sweet into the wormwood that it seemed that I was none other than a knight going forth with sword and lance to bring back his well-beloved out of captivity.

It was, I think, somewhere about an hour after midnight that I discerned, across the waste over which I had been riding steadily, a glimmering uncertain light which I took to be none other than that from the lonesome little alehouse on the Corse of Slakes whither I was bound. The Corse itself is a strange seaboard moss, or stretch of boggy peaty country, from which the sea has gradually retired, ill enough to cross even in daytime if you do not know its tricks from your youth up. From this place, before the military road to Portpatrick was made there used to be a ferry across a cer-

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tain sluggish backwater, and the inn (such as it was) still bore the name of the Ferry House.

Even in its old high days, however, it had been a haunt of robbers and smugglers of the true Jack Ketch brand, ready to add to the defrauding of King George a little throat-cutting or coast-wise piracy. Drovers too on their way back to Ireland, frequented it, not seldom to their own loss, being compelled to leave their purses in some of those honest pockets at the Ferry House, and to depart with reason for thankfulness if they did not also leave their bodies sunk in the deep peaty *coom* of the moss-hags behind the Corse of Slakes.

Now of course, these ancient bugbears existed no longer. But for all that the Ferry House rested curiously lonesome, avoided by decent travellers, beetle-browed and forbidding in exterior aspect and infelix in repute—like some evil woman, old, embittered and no longer able to spread her nets in the sight of any bird, but forever brooding on the days when nets were full and green-goose-catching was an easy trade.

So at any rate the place appeared to me as I urged Peden forward towards the light. A fine new highway indeed passed the front of the house, carrying straight forward between it and the sea, but I was approaching the Ferry House from the moor behind, and in that direction the rearward windows are but little raised above the moss. The rough thatch of the eaves mingled with the upspringing heather, and the whole house might have been walked over as only a greater protuberance of the Corse, had it not been for a mist of reek and the reflection of the hearth-fire which ascended through the wide central chimney and reddened the low clouds that forever brooded over the Corse of Slakes.

There was no soul moving anywhere, yet when I found the stable, lo! there was a beast already there,

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champing and blowing at his empty manger. Nor indeed did he make the least disturbance at the sound of my feet, but permitted me to lead in Peden the Prophet, with only a passing sniff or two of inquiry as to his titles to gentility.

Then by dint of groping I found a feed of oats in the corn-chest, which I gave to Peden. For I knew not what was before me, nor what strange ways I might need to traverse ere the morning. I have learned also that the forehanded man is selfishly merciful to his beast, even before being careful of himself.

This business finished, to be yet more forehanded I turned the key of the stable door and put it in my pocket.

My case being altogether so uncommon and my desire to find the lost maidens so overwhelming, I did not consider it beneath me to lie down on my belly and take a look through the windows of the hut to see what I could spy within.

But the interior of the kitchen, being lit only by a red fire which glowed rather than burned on the hearth, I could only dimly perceive a dark figure shrouded in a great cloak which now and then cast a faggot of peat upon the "greisoch" of red embers.

I became aware also of an ancient wearying chaunt or fuguing tune, crooned with eternal iterance of grace-notes and the added melancholy of the wind *whooping* through a keyhole. Besides the kitchen there was another chamber or "ben-the-hoose" at the other end of the Ferry House. But a newspaper darkened its little square-foot of window, and even the chimney which I squinted down was too narrow to reveal more of the occupant than one booted foot which swung back and forth as if the owner had crossed his legs and were sitting very much at his ease—as it were smoking or meditating.

But the more I looked, acting the spy for Fairlie's

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sake as I would not have done for any other cause, the more did I become convinced that my brother Rupert was within. The swinging boot was a small and varnished one and I could think of no other save Rupert who would be likely to carry such a cavalier accoutrement upon the Corse of Slakes.

At that moment a horse, neighing from the stable caused the varnished boot to disappear as if in the direction of the door. I recognised the sound also, being quick to distinguish the characteristic noises of animals. The neigh was obviously my brother's black Bravo making acquaintance with the dappled patriarch of Glenluce, my good Peden the Prophet.

After that, of course, there was no longer any doubt about the matter. Grierson had not been mistaken. For whatever purpose, Rupert Glendonwyn was waiting in that forlorn public house at midnight; and I, his brother, was about to confront him, with no plan of action save that I was there to find out what he had done with Fairlie and Kate.

No doubt it will be animadverted upon me that I should have waited and spied from a distance upon my brother and his actions. But that was not my feeling at the time nor, indeed, knowing all things as they ultimately came to pass, do I now think that I could very much have bettered it by acting otherwise.

At all events and apart from all theories, this is what I did. Opening the outer door of the hut and bending my head, I passed into the smoky interior. An old woman sprang to her feet with more agility than a misshapen back and features wrinkled and smoke-dried might have betokened.

"Eh, Maister Gregory," she cried, "what's brocht ye back already frae Hamish's island, and preserve us a'—what's come o' the—?"

But before she had time to finish her sentence—upon which so much depended, she had recognised

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from my height and appearance that I could not be Gregory Glendonwyn.

"A minister!" she cried with no pleasant intonation, "and what, reverend sir, micht ye be seekin' at the change-hoose o' the Corse o' Slakes this holy Sabbath nicht?"

I had, however, no wish to waste time upon her, so without bandying words I pushed on in the direction of the "ben-room" occupied by the wearer of the varnished riding-boots.

The old woman, for all her infirmities, was at the door before me.

"Na," she cried, "in there ye shallna gang till ye hae telled me your errand?"

But I put her aside with as little brute force as was possible considering that she clung to me rather like a cat with nine lives than a woman well past the three-score-and-ten, as her appearance advertised her to be.

"I am seeking my brother—stand aside!" I said briefly holding her at arm's length.

So with that I opened the door and there before me, playing a tune to himself upon a small and dainty flute of foreign manufacture was my brother Rupert Glendonwyn.

XVI

FAIRLIE TAKES UP THE TALE

[Manuscript written by Fairlie Glendinning, additional to the first manuscript of John Glendonwyn.—Ed.]

SORELY against my will I write down these things which follow. But one in whose judgment I trust has shown me the need of it, so as best I may, I will set to my task. Properly I ought to begin with the first coming among us of Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn. But that I need not do, for it has been told already by a more practised pen than mine.

Nevertheless it dwells in my memory strangely, for I seem to have grown up into a woman from that night. It is, therefore, already written down how John came over, at the summons of Johnny Colstoun, and sitting close beside me, helped me with my Latin. There was, however, no such great significance in that as the narrator has made out. It all happened quite naturally, and as for me I never thought of anything but the words in the dictionary, and how hard that particular chapter of Cæsar was to translate because of the verbs—and other things.

But afterwards (I will not deny) that night was sweet to look back upon, and even then I think I liked it beyond any lesson I had ever prepared. For I began to understand many things better—and besides John was so kind.

But all the rest that follows came out of Mr. Rupert

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Glendonwyn's meeting with me that night, and following me home because (as he said afterwards) he "thought me innocent and pretty—too good for John"—which eventuated in the love he professed (and I think had) for our Kate—I mean, for my sister.

It began, as I say, from that very first night. Yes, I can see it all now, and wonder how I can have been so blind. But the truth is, I was thinking of other things—selfish things, proper only to myself. For the school and my work there were especially interesting about that time. Besides it is curious how much easier it is to understand and to do one's work when there is a friend always near to say, "That is well done!" or "Don't you think it might be better so?"

Not that I could have helped it, however, had it been ever so. With some girls such events are fated. Men make things happen. Girls have things happen to them—except, of course, Veronica Cæsar. She is different, I grant. All the same something very particular that I know of, did not happen as she wished it—but no matter. At any rate it was so with Kate—and with me also.

I could see, however, even that from that very first night Kate thought a great deal too much about Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn. She disliked him, she said, and that in itself was a sign. Before she went out she whispered to me not to leave her alone. Yet for all that she went to the stable door and held the lantern for him while he got his beast ready. I think now that she was afraid of him—and yet, never having felt afraid of any one in her life before, she wanted to find out what it meant, and so played with the fire till it burnt her.

This is, I know, a poor and lame explanation. But other girls will understand. Many things happen to them just because of that. Not to me, for I never

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was afraid of—well, of anyone all my life. But then I had known him so long, you see. He was afraid of me, though—I knew it, and it was fun to tease him. It seemed so funny to have a grown-up man afraid of a girl like me. I took Johnny Colstoun home with me because of that. Ah, it is strange to think I could have been so light and frivolous just before such terrible things began to happen to us all.

Well, when at last the two were gone my father and I stood looking after them.

"There gangs a Glendonwyn like to nane I ever set eye upon," he said, ruminating curiously, "but my father used to tell me tales of one such."

"Oh, tell me about him, father!" I cried clapping my hands. For anything that concerned the Glendonwyn's pleased me at that time—because we were really descended from the same family, that is.

"It would little conduce to edifying!" he said sternly, "get thee to thy bed lass, and give God thanks for thy happier ignorance! Where is that besom Kate—already nested, I warrant, the slug-a-bed that she is!"

This was my father's ordinary way of showing his love for us two girls which indeed we never doubted of. Or by pulling our ears and suchlike—very winsome and strange in a man accounted so rough and rude. I used often to think that he put on that manner of speech and action before ordinary folk in order that he might cover the really tender heart which was in him. The ordinary tale of the country of course was that he spoilt us.

Then when I went upstairs I began prattling like a foolish child about the brothers while I was letting down my hair. But Kate was cross, saying from her pillow, "If you are going to speak nonsense, take the hair-pins out of your mouth first. I hate your Glen-

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donwyns, Jack-master and Jack-man. But if it pleases you to talk, pray do it like a Christian."

Whereat thinking that perhaps she was tired with all that baking and spinning, I went to the bedside to kiss her. When lo! she would not let me, but pushed me pettishly away with her elbow, telling me not to worry her. And then again in a minute, when I waxed silent with the rebuff, she burst out again, crying that I was unkind to her, that everyone was unkind to her, and that she could not speak a word without its being misunderstood.

So I went and kissed her whether she would or no, putting my arms about her and hushing her. And in another moment she laughed, and pretended that she only just did it all to tease me. But I knew better—oh, so much better. I know exactly why she did it and how she felt—but there is no good in setting all that down here. A man could never understand if one explained for a year. And no woman would so much as need to be told.

"Talk all you want to about your great foolish John," she said laughing. "he has as much romance about him as a plate of porridge!"

Now that, I own, provoked me. For I had always liked John Glendonwyn. And of late (why need I hide it?) I had begun to *respect* him. He was so kind about carrying my books for me and about the Latin. For instance, I never really understood about the active and passive voices of a verb till he showed me in the little summer-house at the back of the woodyard. It was, of course, in Latin, but it did just as well—or perhaps even better. Like this:—*Active*, "I shall or will kiss—I kiss—I have kissed." *Passive*, "I shall or will be kissed—I am kissed—I have been kissed!" I wanted him to take another verb such as "strike" or "lift," but he said "No," that we had better stick to that one till I learned it perfectly, and that it would

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impress the lesson better than any other. And it did. I never forgot it. It ought to be in all the grammars. I wonder why it is not. I suppose because in some languages I have heard it is slightly irregular.

But this had not happened then and I would not have mentioned it, only for Kate saying so foolishly that John was not clever. I think it was very, very clever of him to know that. I asked him if any one had ever taught him grammar that way, and he said, "No!" That he had read it in a book.

So when I retorted on Kate that John was worth a thousand of people who curled their hair and made eyes and were for ever paying foreign-sounding compliments, Kate sat up in bed, and laughed aloud.

"How you can compare them," she said, "I cannot think. John is well enough. He is, as I say, like a bowl of porridge and has about as much flavour. But Mr. Rupert is a travelled gentleman. He looks just, why, like one of the old crusaders who carried the Glendonwyn arms on their knightly shields all the way to Palestine and died charging whole hosts of Saracens—upon the plains of—well, upon some plains, anyway."

At this point I could not help smiling at Kate's sudden enthusiasm.

"Oh, you need not laugh—I am not speaking for myself," she cried. "I did not like him at all at first, and now I hate him. Yes, absolutely. But yet all the more one cannot help seeing that he is very different from the other young men who come here. And what a voice!"

I listened and answered nothing. For if the proverb be true which says that "One man's meat is another man's poison," it is still more veritable when it concerns the likings and dislikings of a pair of women. For me, I could not bear the sight of Rupert Glendon-

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wyn, and Kate said that John was "like a plate of porridge."

There was no "romance" about a plate of porridge—she was never tired of casting up to me. There was no mystery about John Glendonwyn. You knew where to have him all the time.

And so on till I could not help saying, "Well, Kate, you are not asked to have John Glendonwyn that I know of. He does not trouble you much, if he is a plate of porridge!"

Whereat she jumped up quickly (being of a very affectionate nature really) and crying "Why, Fairlie!" kissed me into good humour again.

My poor, poor darling Kate—often, often in the weary days that were coming upon us have I thought over these things, and wondered if you yourself would not have preferred the lack of romance and mystery to all the romantic and mysterious things which happened to you. But I will own that she never said so, and even when far away was never tired of joking me about my "plate of porridge," as she was pleased to call that truest and most loyal of friends. I told her once, in a weak moment, about his cleverness in conjugating the active and passive voices of the Latin verb, and how I had never made another mistake about them again. I was simpler then than I am now.

But she only laughed the more and said it was nothing—that all men were clever that way, though they did not always call it "learning Latin Grammar." But for all that she owned that it *was* clever, and that she liked John the better for it. Which was a great deal for Kate to say.

Kate was nearly four years older than I. She used at times to call me "child" and "baby"—with other names. But in some things I was far older than she. For one thing she took troubles much more to heart than I. I do not know that she felt them more,

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but they used to drive her quite out of herself, and then no one could do anything with her but only me.

I did not notice much that went on between Mr. Rupert and my sister, that is, till John went away back to college on the morning of the 15th of January. I remember the date because I had worn all my pretty things during the first fortnight of the year (we were preparing for the examination) and Kate lent me a pink bodice that she had only worn twice. I said that I might be robbing her. And she answered "Oh, you are welcome to it—Rupert does not like—"

And then stopped short in confusion. I looked at her in amazement, but did not say anything to her then. For I wanted to be down at the school early that morning—before the coach started indeed, when John would come into the school to say good-bye to the Rector. I had promised him and I knew that he would be dreadfully disappointed if I were not in the infant department.

So I put on Kate's bodice (with the sash John liked) and went off, but in my heart I hoarded her words concerning Rupert, and meant to speak to her about them at night. For though it was very well for John to be fond of me, it was not at all the same thing for his brother to make love to Kate. And afterwards I found out that John had said just the same things to Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn I meant to say to Kate—which is a strange thing and shows how the minds of two such friends as we were may run upon the same lines.

John *did* come into the infant department. I was getting down the maps, which were always rolled up from Friday night to Monday morning. I always liked well enough to roll them up at the week-ends, but the days never seemed so long as when I was taking them down on Monday morning.

I observe in John's old diary (to which I have ac-

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cess), the entry for the 15th of January runs thus: "*Found F. in school-room. Helped her unroll maps!*"

In the manuscript written in his maturer years, when the cares and harassments of his ministry had altered his way of thinking to some extent, he makes the statement that though an attachment for me was doubtless forming in his heart, he had thus far carefully abstained from any overt lovemaking. This was exceedingly noble of him, doubtless, but for myself I prefer the earlier form "*Found F. in school-room alone. Helped her unroll maps.*"

At least these words convey better the impression the scene of that Monday morning made upon me, and as for overt lovemaking, I don't know what he would call overt—but there, this is more than enough concerning myself. I am not writing my own story, save in so far as it is Kate's also.

Well, at any rate I did speak to my sister that night, and though she was at first inclined to be haughty with me, I found that Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn had been at the Flower-cot three times—each time, curiously enough, choosing (or by accident happening upon) a time when my father was absent. Then I remembered that on two of these days a message had come from the new English doctor at Kilgour, saying that he wanted some improvements made on his study and green-house. And once my father had walked into town with me to see about these. Dr. Warner made up to us on the way to school. A tall, dark, spare young man with eyes too close together, piercing like gimlets, and with a slight cast in them. He stood gazing fixedly, trying to make me look at him all the time he was holding my father in talk—which, indeed it is not difficult to do at any time.

Anything so barefaced would have driven Kate crazy. She was all on pins and needles if any one did a thing like that to her. Only by working her hardest

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all the time could she get rid of the feeling that a man was looking steadily at her.

But with me it is different. I am more of the plate-of-porridge type, which I daresay, gets through the world easier and with much less trouble both to itself and to other folk. So I did not mind a bit about Dr. Warner's eyes. He might stare me through and through if he liked. I only joggled my father's arm, called, "Good-bye, old dear!" and went off to school with the gimlet eyes following my back hair up the street till I turned the corner. But it was little I cared. On the way I was going to buy some brandy-balls for my little favourite Johnny Colstoun. He had met me the night before, somewhat ostentatiously wiping the tears from his eyes.

"All mine bwandy-balls is doned! Mist' Dzon 'Donin, he dirved me lots. I'se off'ul sorry he's done—isn't you, Teatzer?"

Dear little man, so full of feeling!

XVII

THE HEARTS OF WOMEN

JOHN says that a woman can put no right guiding constraint either upon her tongue or her pen. And I must proceed to tell my tale straightforwardly to prove him in the wrong. Well after John went away I saw Mr. Rupert twice or thrice at my father's house, and once when Kate was out when I arrived sooner than I had been expected, I went round and came upon them standing close together on the wood-edge, talking very earnestly. I walked straight up to them, and asked if Mr. Rupert had come to see father about anything. For if so he would find him on the Kilgour Road talking to his friend Mr. Warner—that I had passed them a hundred yards on this side of the Brig End.

And at this Kate was angry and bade me go indoors to my own business. But Mr. Rupert, who was always exceedingly polite (though from the first he knew that I did not like him), only laughed his rippling laugh (which was at once hard and light like a hand running over the upper keys of a piano) and said that my idea was a good one. He *would* go and see my father.

And so he did and was asked home to discuss all about the Trinity and the Doctrine of Transubstantiation concerning which it appeared that he could give my father many new points, being intimately acquainted with the doctrine and practice of the Roman

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Church abroad. Or at least so he was not slow to affirm.

As Mr. Rupert came in through the door, he nodded and said laughingly "You see I have done your bidding, Miss Fairlie." And that night he bode till nearly midnight, keeping us all hanging on his words, with relating his adventures and experiences in many lands abroad. Also he did not look nearly so much at Kate as usual—so much so that our poor old Will, who was inclined to suspect him, said to me: "I thought that the fellow was hankering after our Kate, but I see I have mistaken him. He never looks at her—more at you if anything, Fairlie. Mind what you are about. I will not have my sisters talked about."

Alas, poor boy, he little knew how much they were to be talked about before all was done, and how little he or any one could help it.

However, as it happened, it mattered little what Will thought. For an event took place the very next day which settled much that remains to be told in this history, which shall be told, too, as plainly and clearly as I can write it—I cannot promise also, as concisely. For a woman's pen is not given that way. But then the printer can always cut out, or the reader skip, anything that is not needful to the story.

Well then, it was the next day, the 18th of January (at least, so I believe, for it all happened so close together) that I went to the school as usual, and started my work under the influence of a strange depression. I think that mostly I am a pretty contented person, but sometimes for no reason at all I have days when, as John says (I pick up his phrases much as I learned the tenses of the Latin verb), "the grasshopper is a burden!" Most girls are like that.

Well this was one of these days. I was cross with the children. They were, indeed, more than usually tiresome, and I slapped my dear little Johnny Colstoun

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for just nothing at all. He cried promptly, and I was glad that I had some confiscated candy in my desk, with which, and a kiss, he was comforted. But all the forenoon the weight of something—I knew not what—of foreboding and brooding fear kept deepening and deepening upon me. And I could have cried too, if only *my* brandy-balls had been near at hand to comfort me. It was no use doing it without.

During these last days I had made great friends with Dr. Cæsar's Vera. Hitherto I had always thought Veronica Cæsar distant and haughty, and had been a little afraid of her. For everybody declared that she was so clever and said such bitter things. But it only shows how mistaken people can be. She came to see me at the school, though she has ten times as much to do at home as I have at the Academy, without being paid a penny-piece for it, while I could buy all my dresses to suit myself out of my own money, and give a lot to my father too. Though I don't think he ever touched it, but put it away instead in a box, saying with his queer smile, "There's a yard of carpet for the stairs"—or something like that—something he knew I would like.

Well, Vera Cæsar had made me promise to come and lunch with her at least one day in the week—indeed whenever I was not at the Rector's. So I went the day I was so depressed, and as soon as I got upstairs into Vera's room (she has always to slip in and lock the door quickly to keep out the children, and even then they thump and whine all the time outside), what did I do but burst out crying like a great baby!

And at this Vera looked queer for a moment, and then took me to her arms, making me lay my head on her shoulder and putting eau-de-cologne on my temples and petting me.

The strange thing was that she thought it was because—because John Glendonwyn had gone away that

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I was crying. How ever she could have imagined that I do not know. At any rate she did, and she was going on to say all sorts of nice things about him (crying herself a little bit too) when I told her it was not that at all which was making me unhappy.

"Goodness gracious, then, child—what is it?" she cried, quite startled.

"It is about his brother!" I blurted out before I thought, and then Vera's face flushed and she stopped petting me and began to laugh. Though, heaven knows I would have needed consolation a great deal more if I had been fretting for Mr. Rupert than if it had been about old John. However, it did not strike Veronica Cæsar that way.

"Fairlie—my little Fairlie," she cried instead, all quite joyous in a moment, "this is what it is to be so pretty and winsome as you are. I am glad that I am just plain old Vera Cæsar, whom nobody troubles—except these young ruffians in the hall—be quiet there, Tommy, or I will slap you when I come out—hard! Marcus, give him his top, do you hear!"

"And the brother—yes, I knew that it was the brother who was going to your house so much—much oftener than John. But for all that I had thought—well, your sister is very pretty and clever, is she not?"

In this way women talk in half sentences, understanding each other by the help of looks and intonations—oftener still by sheer instinct. And so after that (because of course I had no right to tell her Kate's secret), I am afraid Vera Cæsar misunderstood about Mr. Rupert and in the end was cross with me for misleading her. But I have written it all down exactly as it happened, and when she reads it she will forgive me. For I do not see how any one could have acted otherwise than as I did.

So instead of taking me down to the dining-room, where the Doctor sat at the table-head much like a

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benevolent judge presiding over the trial and condemnation of legs of mutton and boiled fowls, and a dozen children clustered about their eldest sister, clattering plates and talking, Veronica made me lie down on her bed, and locked me in with a book while she flew off to carve and serve "Cæsar's Tenth Legion" as she called her brothers and sisters—I was quite proud that I knew why.

Then after ten minutes or so she came back, bright and brisk as if she had only been for a sea-bath, carrying a dainty little piece of chicken's breast on a plate, with creamy potatoes and salad—just what I liked. I am a dreadful baby about such things. I do like nice eaties and suppose I always shall, even when I can read Livy from end to end without looking once at the dictionary.

Then old Vera (she was not old, really) sat down on the bed-side and petted me, and said pretty things about me. It is so nice when women love one another like that. It does not always last, but it is nice at the time. And that day when I needed it, Vera was certainly just as nice as she could be, till after a while my headache went altogether away, leaving only a little of the heartache behind it. So I kissed her and thanked her for being so good to me.

"No—no," she said, "it's you who have been good—very good to me."

And I did not know at the time that she was thinking of what had slipped out about Mr. Rupert or I should have thought of some way of making her understand, without telling about Kate. But I did not know and so things got all tangled up between us somehow. I know I am not writing this as I ought, but I can write a very good essay when I like. I once did one on "The Economy of the Infant Schoolroom" which got a prize. And I could have written this just as well. But when I showed a page of it to John, he

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laughed and said that, though I certainly deserved a prize for thinking of such a thing, he thought ordinary people would understand it best, if I wrote just as things came into my head—as if I were writing a letter to him telling about the newly hatched chickens I had and the little household things we love to talk about between ourselves. There—it is out. And it is so disappointing. I had meant to keep it a secret to the very last page, as the people who write novels do. Then just before I signed my name at the foot of the end sheet to show that I had really written it, I would have made a row of dots—like this, so nice:

.....

And then in a line by itself and in a different type to be a grand surprise:

“JOHN AND I ARE MARRIED!”

Or perhaps it would be better (and certainly neater) just to end with a card like this:

* Mr. and Mrs. John Glendonwyn *

Yes, I do think that would have been best of all. But my terrible critic says I am only wasting time, when every one is waiting to hear the story of our poor Kate, which is really the only one in the book. But I do not agree with John always. Everything helps to give the true impression of how we two girls felt and spoke and acted before the coming of those terrible days we were to pass through, which even now, in spite of the later brightness and all our blessings, cast a long evening-tide shadow across my life.

At any rate I did feel very much happier when I left the Manse of Kilgour and walked back to the school.

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My headache was quite gone, and I felt quieted and at peace with the world. I do not know whether it was the good cry I had had, or Veronica's sympathy, or the breast of the chicken—perhaps a little of all three. But at any rate I was a different girl.

XVIII

CLANDESTINE

BUT when I got near the school a new, and at the moment, pleasant surprise awaited me.

I found the children, big and little, cheering and shouting, hiving in uproarious throngs about the Rector, and immediately scattering and reuniting as soon as he sent them away. It appeared a perfect miracle to me, who had never seen such conduct since I first went to the Academy. For the Rector was as a man apart from us—teachers and taught, and even that priggish Martin Fraser, the little boy dressed up in the long coat with the ridiculous tails, was cheering along with the others. The poor lad at that time did me the compliment to imagine himself very much in love, and though he hardly ever spoke to me, he was accustomed to stand apart and glare at those who were less bashful. But now he came running, as hard as he could, shouting that Mr. Colstoun had got a degree from his own University of Aberdeen for a book he had written—all about Roman history and proving it wasn't history at all, but something made up by the Germans. Martin also told me that we would have to say "Doctor" Colstoun now just as we did to Dr. Cæsar, but that the Rector was another kind of doctor and wore a different hood.

So I went away to Mr. Colstoun and asked him whether he would be vexed if sometimes, just at first, I forgot to call him "Doctor." And I told him how glad I was, and that I hoped his gown would suit his

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complexion, and if he would have to keep his hood over his head in the hot weather.

At which he laughed and said that he did not think it would make much difference to him. Which indeed it did not, for I never saw him with his gown on, except once a year on examination and speech days. And then his wife has almost to go down on her knees to make him promise to wear it, after she had looked it out and laid it on the spare room bed.

So of course there had to be a half-holiday at the Academy. Indeed the children were taking it already. It was a warning to me to see how quickly strictest discipline may be overturned. For the whole of the children, without any dismissal or leave given, ran off out of the playground, waving their school bags and shouting, to tell their parents that the master was going to be a Doctor now, and keep the nastiest kind of physic in his desk instead of "taws." For of course that was all they knew about university degrees—the silly things!

I stayed a little, waiting for a chance to speak to Mrs. Colstoun just to kiss her and tell her how happy I was. And at last I got an opportunity. But she only smiled and said, "Ah, my dear, it won't make the least difference. He will just be as tiresome as ever! Men are like that. Only getting hardened to them, makes the very best of them endurable."

But secretly I could see that she was both pleased and proud—especially when Dr. Cæsar arrived with his fine coat and tall hat on, and made quite a nice speech about the great honour it was to the Academy and to the town. His wife looked across at Mr. Colstoun just then with something that glittered very brightly in her eyes.

But now I am quite at the end of the pleasant part and must "gird myself," as John says, and "keep my eyes on the goalposts." For John mixes old college words about playing games like football and things out

of the Bible in a way that I at least have not got hardened to yet.

I went slowly back then through the pleasant winter's afternoon. It was still early, and when I got home—lo, there was no one to be seen! I called Kate as I came through the gate to tell her the news, and wondered that she did not answer. I ran upstairs. She was not there either. I looked about and found her work-a-day dress on a chair, and the hanging cupboard open where she kept her Sunday frock.

Then a wild fear came over me. I held to the mantelpiece and steadied myself, praying for strength to withstand, for knowledge to judge what I must do. Something told me to go down the woodside, where in a field a hundred yards from the highroad was the old walled cemetery of the Glendonwyns.

Without removing my school hat or waiting a moment I ran down the side of the hedge, crossed over at the stepping stones, and took through the wood like a hare. Thank God I was not too late. There was Kate standing in her cloak and hat, a little cardboard bandbox at her side. She did not hear me till I was quite close upon her. And then she started and turned, dropping the box and thrusting out one hand as if to prevent me from taking hold of her.

"Where are you going, Kate?" I gasped, breathless with my fright, though indeed I knew all too well. But even then my resolution was coming upon me, definite and clear.

She stood looking at me with wide, shining eyes—with nevertheless something so hunted and desperate in them that I shivered. Yet there was a certain strange pride and pleasure in them as well. I thought at first she was not going to speak to me, so I cried again, holding her by the arm.

"Kate—tell me—speak to me! What are you doing here, dressed like this? Where are you going?"

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She answered me in one sentence, still fixing me with that fascinated, half-unconscious gaze.

"I am going away to be married to Rupert Glendonwyn!"

"Married?"—I cried, "Kate—and you never told me! Oh, Kate!"

"He would not let me," she answered, "I was coming back to-night. It must be quite private. No one is to know!"

"And our father?" I said. For he never could abide either of us long out of his sight.

"My father is gone to Drumfern on business," she said. "He will not be back to-night. But I have left a note with Will telling him I had gone out to see a friend, that the tea was in the teapot and everything ready for you and the boys. Why could you not have stayed at school till your usual time? I could have got back without anyone knowing. Rupert will be so angry."

All this she said without a touch of her old defiant self, speaking almost like one in a dream, a difference very obvious to me, yet somehow difficult to express. Perhaps it was as if she had been a scholar repeating a lesson—with something of what they now call mesmeric influence, a fascinated look in eyes which had no single glance to waste on me, her sister, but which kept forever gazing up the woodside for the first glimpse of the man for whom she waited.

Instantly I took my resolution. In some things John says I am much more determined than either Kate or himself. And certainly I never had the least feeling of fear of him. Nor did I ever look out for him in the life-and-death way Kate did for Mr. Rupert. I always knew that I could do what I liked with John, and that made me the more careful about telling him anything. For he would instantly go away and do it. But with Kate it was different. She actually liked being mas-

tered. And from that first hour of my asserting myself I took a new place with her.

"Kate," I said, "if you go, I am going with you. Understand that! What is right for you to do, is right for me to see! I will not leave you till I can do so with the man who is your husband before all the world."

Kate—our independent Kate—so proud and disdainful, only lifted up her hands in a frightened fashion and cried, "Oh, Fairlie, Fairlie—what will Rupert say?"

We had not long to wait for what Rupert might have to say. A close carriage came along with the windows up and stopped a hundred yards away opposite the clump of great trees which had grown up about the neglected burying ground of the Glendonwyns.

"That is the signal," she said, "I am to go to meet him now."

She lifted her handbox, and turning towards me she opened her lips as if to make a last appeal.

"I wish you would go home, Fairlie," she cried. "I am afraid that Rupert will be so angry and disappointed."

"Let him," I answered, hoping to stir her out of her strange insensibility by sharpness, "if he is ashamed of getting you for his wife, he is not worth having for a husband."

"Ah, you do not know—you do not know!" she said earnestly, laying her hand on my breast. "He is all that is noble and good. And—I love him!"

"Well," said I, "it is high time for him to show his goodness and nobility now. My sister is not going to be married without having me for a bridesmaid!—So much is very clear to me. I have made up my mind."

All the while we had been walking towards the old

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mausoleum, the white walls of which gleamed above the trees. Kate stepped aside, turned sharply round the trunk of a tree which in the course of years had pushed its way through the wall and then mouldered partly away, leaving a narrow passage by which it was easy enough to enter the enclosure. I followed her towards the little chapel by a trodden path, and lo! there on a stone seat in the deep embrasure of the porch sat Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn smoking a cigarette, with the air of dreamy indifference which always characterised him—not a bit like John when he came to give me my Latin lesson.

At our approach, however, he threw down the little roll of lighted paper, and sprang to his feet. I think he was just going to clasp Kate in his arms with a rapturous cry when he caught sight of me on the path a step or two behind. His arms dropped promptly to his side and he turned upon my sister with a look half inquiring, wholly savage.

"I knew it—I knew it," she cried, knitting her hands piteously. "I told Fairlie so. I could not help Fairlie coming. Do not be angry, Rupert! She will go back if you ask her. I know she will!"

She laid her hand on his arm as she spoke with a kind of defiance. He touched her cheek lightly with his lips, and then looked over her shoulder at me.

"Your company does us an unexpected honour, Mademoiselle!" he said.

But I would not be put down—least of all by Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn. John says that upon occasion I can look like a tigress robbed of her young—though much *he* knows about it!

"Not more unexpected than the honour you have done me, sir!" I said.

"What do you mean?" he asked, a frown gathering between his handsome brows.

"I mean the honour of taking away my sister from her family in order to cheat her with a clandestine marriage," I said, boldly, "at a time when you have reason to know that my father and I have been hoodwinked and got rid of."

I think that as I said these words to him, Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn blushed for the first and only time in his life. He looked at me without speaking, and I stared back at him. What power his eyes had over Kate and others—even to some extent over John, I never could fathom. For me—he had neither attraction nor likeableness, nor any more influence than the village pump! And I think he knew it, and that he did not like me the less for it. In fact it rather piqued him than otherwise.

"Mademoiselle," he said, speaking with the utmost respect, "you do me wrong. I will tell you in a word how matters stand between us. I love your sister—love her as I never thought to love any woman. (Kate drew nearer to him as he spoke and he put a protecting arm about her waist.) But I dare not—cannot marry her openly at present. Yet to come together we are resolved. We will not chance losing one another. My father wishes me to marry for money. My careless folly before I had this to live for (he patted Kate's cheek) has crippled the family estate. My father has sacrificed a large sum (and it may be more than that) to save me from ruin. I cannot, in utter justice, make his efforts vain. In a year or so the need for concealment will pass away—indeed, things will be better as soon as my brother is settled in his parish. Kate will then be acknowledged as my wife before all the world, as to-day I am going to make her in law and in fact."

And, as he bent down to kiss her, she looked up at him with the same great adoring eyes I stood in

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wonderment. In this fascinated, love-sick girl I could not see our swift, nervous, free-spoken Kate. But then, none knows till the thing is tried, how love will take any woman, when it comes to her once for all.

Of course when I heard these things I had nothing more to say, save that I would go with them to be Kate's witness and bridesmaid, just as we had always promised each other should be the case.

To my surprise Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn made no objections. He only said, "I brought Warner with us to drive. I think you have met him. You will in that case have no objections to a little of his society. We are the better of a couple of witnesses."

"Where is the marriage to take place?" I asked sharply. And at the question, Mr. Rupert, who was walking in front with Kate on his arm, half turned his head and smiled quizzically over at me.

"Trust me," he said, "see how Kate trusts me! Take a little lesson, I pray you, dear Mademoiselle, from your elder sister."

"Nay," I answered yet more sharply, "that is just the very reason why I cannot trust you at all—not one inch farther than I can see you!"

"In that case I can only ask Mademoiselle to do me the honour to wait and be convinced!" he replied, and in another moment they had passed out of the private pathway, leading from what had evidently been their lovers' trysting place, into the open roadway. The brougham was a small one, seated for two inside. It had been hired by Dr. Warner from a coach-builder in the town of Kilgour.

Mr. Rupert handed Kate in with the air of a great and courtly gentleman, which indeed he was. Then he turned to offer me the vacant place by her side.

"Since you are resolved to honour us, Mademoiselle," he said, "*Voilà!*"

But I had another spirit.

"No, indeed, I thank you," I answered. "I am coming as an uninvited guest, and I will sit by—the coachman!"

And suiting the action to the word I clambered up to the box seat in a moment.

"So much the better for you, Warner!" said Mr. Rupert laughingly. "And for you!" said the Doctor, in French.

Mr. Glendonwyn waited a moment beside the carriage, adjusting the driving-apron to keep me warm. And as the afternoon was closing in, I drew my cloak up about my throat and brought the cape of it over my head so as almost to conceal my face. Mr. Rupert nodded a bright approval.

"For a young lady with so marked a dislike to concealments and stratagems," he said, "I must say that you adapt yourself to them with much natural cleverness!"

We drove swiftly, and for the first mile or two my companion kept silence. He continued to regard me, however, at frequent intervals out of his close-set, triangular eyes, with glances like bayonet thrusts. But I am not imaginative and I cared nothing either for his looks or his silence—save that from Dr. Warner they were both more acceptable to me than speech.

As, however, I shall have to recount another carriage journey, under yet more surprising circumstances, I do not mean to linger upon the details of this. Let it suffice that I saw my sister duly and legally married to Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn, of Castle Gower, by a minister of the Kirk of Scotland, at that time acting chaplain to the regiment of kilted foot quartered at Drumfern. And in addition I had Kate back again at Boatcroft before ten o'clock that night. As to the place where the ceremony took place,

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since there will be abundant opportunity for description of it hereafter in the course of these various narratives, I need not particularise now. It was called the House of the Corse of Slakes.

XIX

LUCIFER, SON OF THE MORN

THE months that followed upon Kate's clandestine marriage were not wholly happy ones. There seemed some evil power upon my dear girl. She was not herself either in the house, nor yet long happy out of it. I could easily understand why that should be. For when a woman is new married she ought to be with her husband—that is, if so be they love one another. Then there were such constant concealments and endeavours to hide their meetings, that I was more than once at my wits' end, and wished heartily that I had never meddled in other folks' business—but, as the old folks say, had let them "gang their ain gait."

Yet at this time, I do believe that Mr. Rupert was minded to do that which was right, so far that is, as he knew it. And when the time appeared ripe for the telling of his father (which happened in a very few months)—John being in a fair way to finish his course, be inducted into his living, and at the same time other circumstances concurring—Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn without much pressure agreed to reveal all to Mr. Glendonwyn.

As may be anticipated, it was I who brought the matter to a head. For I went to the trysting place at the mausoleum with Kate the night before and wrung the promise from him at the point of the bayonet. In these days it was only by threatening to go straight to our father that I could keep a hold upon

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Kate and her husband. So all the next day I was in a great anxiety at school, fretting to get home and hear how the Laird of Castle Gower had taken the news of his son's new relationship. Once over the bridge on my way home I hurried fast along the road, and was not more than half way there, when at a turn of the wood I met Kate hastening towards the river with a face like death for whiteness.

I ran to my sister and caught her by the arm, but she scarce minded me, muttering the while to herself, "He wishes to get rid of me—he does not love me at all—any more!"

So I did what I could—speaking hard and sharp to her, and making her turn and come back with me—which after a moment's struggle the poor girl did willingly enough. It was indeed wonderful to see how this Kate of ours, who before had been so brave and gay, was broken down in mind in a few months—though not at all in body, for she seemed to grow more ethereally beautiful every day. And when I saw her coming through the firwood aisles it seemed like Bonny Kilmeny returned again to the earth.

*"For nae smile was seen on Kilmeny's face,
As still was her look, and as still was her e'e,
As the stillness that lay on the emerant lea,
Or the mist that sleeps on a waveless sea."*

Never have I seen any woman who yielded her soul up to a man so utterly as did Kate to her husband. Yet I never could be sure in my own mind that it was really love. At least there was something else in it, too. And if the old tales of love potions and witchcraft were possible nowadays, I would say that Mr. Rupert had laid some secret spell upon her.

Never—never was a girl so changed. There was no sound in the house now, when she was in it, above

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stairs or below. The boys talked in whispers, or scattered awkwardly when she came near. For she would walk through them, as if she did not see them, never singing at her work, but just going straight forward with that pale, strange, and far-away look on her face.

Even my father—who is shrewd in all matters outside his own house, but who, so long as there is no need to call in doctor or undertaker, does not notice what he calls the “fykes o’ weemenfolk,” talked vaguely of sending Kate “to the saut-water when the weather gat a wee warmer” for a change of air.

It was not the first night of her trouble that I could get from Kate what Mr. Rupert had said to her; and indeed, even when I did, it was only the threat of my father going straight up to Castle Gower would make her tell me. It was in the long run the saving of us (so far that is, as things could be saved) that Kate, after she had lost faith in all else, believed that I, her sister, would do the thing I said. Moreover, how God favoured and strengthened me for all these trials—I who had never faced a sorrow of my own in my life—appears more and more wonderful to me as the years pass by.

So far as I could learn what Rupert had really said (for every word had to be drawn from Kate as with a corkscrew), it was to the effect that his father would never under any circumstances acknowledge the marriage. Mr. Glendonwyn would fight it to the end. Matters were as bad as they could be, it seemed. Rupert would be ruined if it were known that Kate was his wife. His father would disinherit him—leave him without a shilling. Not only Mr. Rupert would be a bankrupt, but Gregory also.—Worse than all, both of them, for something they had put their hands to in connection with trust-money, might find themselves in prison on a serious charge.

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This last it was that set my poor girl to the wildest talk of killing herself in order that she might never "be a drag and a curse" upon Rupert." She had only brought him sorrow (so, poor thing, she said over and over again) while he had given her all the happiness she had ever known. She was his, and he might make a stepping-stone of her body, so that he would be happy. She lived only for him—and so on and so on till it gave me a headache to listen to her—besides making me cross beyond telling. I love John well and well enough, but I know what is good for a man to be told—and the less a man hears of such talk the better it is for both man and woman. He will grow to believe it in time, and from believing, it is but a step to trading upon it.

(Signed)

FAIRLIE GLENDINNING.
Her Opinion.

Oh, but it was a weary time! Every night I had to go and wait by the edge of the wood, hearing the voices of husband and wife within—Mr. Rupert trying to persuade Kate to something and she refusing more and more weakly. Then one night I marched boldly in and faced my gentleman. He sat there with Kate's head on his shoulder, talking low in her ear. His hand was about her certainly, but in a careless way. But as I am a Christian woman, he would disengage it from time to time, in order to solace himself with a cigarette or a tune upon his flute, without disturbing her head which lay lax and pale upon his shoulder. I could not have believed such heartless insensibility of any man where a girl like Kate was concerned.

I think Mr. Rupert heard me coming, but he never moved—only took the cigarette from his lips and waved me to a seat.

"Always pleased to see you, Mademoiselle," he

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said, "pray do not conceive that you are intruding at all!"

"I do not so conceive," I said, stamping my foot—for in those days and where my sister was concerned I could be a perfect vixen, "and if you think so, Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn, I do not care. There is your wife—what are you going to do about her?—The time has come for owning or disowning her. Which is it to be?"

"Pray favour us with your advice," said Mr. Rupert with the greatest coolness, not a whit put out—indeed that he never was with me whatever I said to him. "I should value your opinion above all things. It seems there is a somewhat sharp little dilemma facing us. If I own Kate as my wife, I am ruined! If I do not—she is!"

"Well, then," said I, without at all understanding what he meant, "you are a brave man—all men are brave—let the ruin be yours! Surely you do not hesitate?"

"No," he said, thoughtfully, "for myself, I do not think I would hesitate!"

He knocked the ash from his cigarette with the swiftest movement of his little finger. Indeed all his movements were quick, silent, and feline. And I have never liked any man who reminded me of a cat ever since. I would not trust one such with anything from a bucket of coals to the heart of a woman. He continued.

"I do not think I would greatly mind being—ah, what the world calls ruined. But there are two who would for me."

"And who may they be?" I cried, furious with anger at his dallying.

"Not you, my dear, pretty, little sister, Fairlie! I can see that very well!" he said. "And let me tell you your temper becomes you excessively. It is a

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pity that poor John will neither know how to evoke it—nor yet how to appreciate it when it is provoked. I could do both!”

But I did not heed his persiflage.

“Who are the two whom you must consider at all hazards?” I demanded.

“My wife and my father,” he said. “Kate, you would not have me ruined, would you? No, I thought not. And my father—he has made the greatest sacrifice one man can make for another. He has committed a crime for my sake. I cannot leave him to bear the penalty alone!”

“Well then, having this mighty regard for your father,” I cried, “I wish to know what you mean to do with your wife. Surely you do not mean her to bear—what you call the penalty alone?”

For a minute he did not answer, but looked away across the fields towards the sea, which could be seen, a little blue cupful of it, through a V-shaped notch of the hills. He was handsome—I will never deny that. He looked sometimes like an angel contriving devilry. So he did then, a kind of prince among such angels.

“I must see my father first,” he said, “I have given him a pledge not to do anything without consulting him. I will have an answer for you to-morrow, Mademoiselle.”

“If you had begun that practice sooner,” I retorted bitterly, “my sister would not have been where she is to-day!”

But when the morrow came there was no handsome Rupert at the trysting stone, and Kate, after waiting two hours came home and sought me, frantic with tears.

“He is dead—he is dead,” she cried, “I know that he is dead. He has never missed before—no, nor once disappointed me,” she cried, “what shall I do, Fairlie? Oh, tell me what I shall do! Where shall I go?”

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No one who has not seen and known our bright, brave, careless Kate Glendinning as she was, can have any idea of the agony it was to me to hear her and see her now—wrapped up soul and body in a worthless man. But so it was, and I could not help it. All I could do, was to stand by her as best I might. Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn could not blind or deceive or hoodwink me. He was welcome to try.

It struck me that we had better go back to the tryst at the mausoleum of the Glendonwyns, which had been the lovers' meeting-place almost from the first. But Kate would not accompany me. She declared that she could not bear the place when *he* was not there.

So it chanced that the first news came to me. I was skirting rapidly round the high crumbling wall of the cemetery to get at the little secret passage by the hollow tree when I saw, emerging from a field-path that crosses the policies of Gower to a point on the high-road a mile or two further on, a little squarely built, oldish man in a grey suit, wearing a little round hat. He had that look of spruce self-conscious humility which marks the domestics of the great in plain clothes.

He stopped a little uncertainly on seeing me, touched his hat, and came forward.

"May I ask—are you Miss Glendinning?" he said with grave politeness.

I told him the truth. I was Miss Glendinning. And it was true—that is, I had been since the 18th of January, the day when Kate and I had made a little excursion together. But I knew that probably I was not the person he wished to see. However, he took his hat in his hand and delivered his message with an air of the utmost respect.

"Then I am sorry to inform you on the part of Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn, that he has had a rather unfortunate accident, which will prevent him waiting upon

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you to-day. But he has sent me personally to make his excuses. It is an injury to his leg—not serious, he bids me say, but only just sufficiently painful to keep him laid up for a week or two!”

How thankful I was that I had gone to the trysting place alone! For what the result would have been if the news of her husband's accident had been told at first hand to Kate, I do not care to think.

At all events, as it was, no such difficulty arose, for I was able to break the matter in such a way as not to alarm my sister.

Each day thereafter I met the man in grey at the trysting place, and obtained the latest messages and generally also a letter from the sick man. These last were written in pencil on stray scraps of paper, with the lack of epistolary pomp and circumstance proper to a man writing hurriedly from a sick-room.

To Kate these notelets were inconceivably precious. She slept with them clasped in her hand, and, waking in the night I could hear her sobbing as she kissed them, doubtless praying, too, for the writer. But at the end of the second week there came a pause. On two successive days I went to the tree and twice I was disappointed. I was compelled to invent messages and explanations to pacify Kate. I suppose I ought not to have done this (though the matter is debatable) but I am writing—not the story of what I ought to have done, but that of what I did do.

On the third day to my great terror Kate suddenly announced her intention of accompanying me, and herself questioning the butler. We set out, and lo! there by the entrance of the mausoleum with the key of the great gate in his hand, was, not Grierson in his trim suit, but Mr. Gregory Glendonwyn himself, looking as grand and majestic as he was wont to appear to us every Sabbath day, sitting in the great square pew with the Glendonwyn arms blazoned in gold upon

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the panels, and behind his head the banner which Randolph Glendonwyn, third and last Viscount, had carried over the hills and far away, to fight for the Pretender in the '15.

At sight of us Mr. Glendonwyn took off his hat in the grand manner in which he did everything.

He appeared to know us perfectly, and to be able to distinguish one from the other without difficulty. I could feel Kate's ankles failing beneath her, and the drag upon my arm grew almost more than I could bear.

"For God's sake, Kate," I whispered, "do not let yourself be overcome. Show how brave you can be for Rupert's sake!"

"I will be brave for Rupert," she said, drawing herself up at the word, "he shall not be ashamed for me."

And indeed he had no need.

For in a moment the lost pride seemed to come back into her carriage, the old haughty look into her eyes. I think it was because she felt herself instinctively in the presence of her arch-enemy.

Nevertheless it was with every outward semblance of politeness that Mr. Glendonwyn opened the great gate for us—the gate I had never seen unlocked since I was a child, and we used to cross the furrows from Boatcroft to rattle the padlock and run away, thinking ourselves all the while the bravest of the brave.

"Will you be pleased to enter?" he said, "I have something to say to you both which had better be said in as much privacy as possible."

At that moment I think it was the consciousness that I was of as good blood and family as he which sustained me more than anything—that, and the thought that of his two sons one was the husband of my sister and the other at that moment was occupied in wishing he could be mine.

As soon as he had arrived at the front of the mau-

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soleum Mr. Glendonwyn turned about upon us and in quite a different manner demanded, "Which of you claims to be my son's wife?"

I was about to speak, when Kate with a new fire in her eye or rather a flashing out of the old fire replied, "I do not claim to be—I am!"

"Ah," he said, thoughtfully, "it is well that you do not claim the rank publicly at any rate. I presume that you have no desire to ruin my son—your—your husband?"

It cost those proud lips something to get that word out. "No," said Kate, "I would die rather."

The Laird of Gower looked at her with a chill grey eye infinitely keen and piercing. I was glad then that John's eyes were blue. He took them from his mother.

"If that be so," he said, "you may the more readily subscribe to the plan I am commissioned to put before you. The need for concealment is only for a time. But I am under the necessity of paying a large sum of money at an early date which I could not obtain, if it were known that you were Rupert Glendonwyn's wife. He must marry money, or at least have the reputation of being about to do so. I understand that my son has informed you how serious are the circumstances, and what ruin and disgrace would be the consequences to us both if we were unable to raise and refund the money which I used to pay for Rupert's extravagances. I have no personal interest in the matter, except to promote the best interests of my heir—which this unfortunate business has seriously compromised."

He paused a little and as Kate did not reply (indeed, I much doubt if she understood completely) he proceeded in the same frigidly legal tone.

"There is, then, in the present condition of affairs, which my son has put before you, and as I now

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repeat, no alternative but that you should obey your husband's summons and withdraw yourself from the world for a time."

"I am ready now—I will go to him!" cried Kate earnestly. The old man, taken somewhat aback at her eagerness, put out his hand to stay her.

"No," he said, "there are many things to be thought of and arranged. First, you must not go to Castle Gower. That would be fatal indeed. I will send you word as soon as we decide upon a place of safety, and as to when we shall go thither. Do not be afraid. You will be well looked after. I promise you that."

"And Rupert is to be with me?" said Kate, looking up at Gregory Glendonwyn with such eyes—so full of the dreamy haze of self-abnegation and devotion that they would have melted any heart of flesh that ever beat in the bosom of man. But alas! it was a veritable heart of stone our poor girl had to deal with—at least, in all that concerned her interests.

"Yes," he said, smiling, "doubtless Rupert will join you so soon as his ankle is cured. Of course, he cannot be there all the time. He will have to come and go."

Then to see the glow of joy and gladsome peace overspread the sweet face of my sister!

"I thank you, sir," she said in a voice murmurous like the cooing of a dove. "I will kiss your hand for giving my husband back to me."

And she actually took the passive hand of Gregory Glendonwyn and lifted it reverently to lips into which the rose colour had come flooding back.

But if her kiss had been that of a toad or an adder, Mr. Glendonwyn could not have manifested more anxiety to disengage himself.

"I will communicate with you," he said, more coldly than before; "rest assured that the best interests of

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both yourself and Rupert will be considered in every way."

He lifted his hat, bowed us out of the enclosure, and the last we saw of him he was locking up the great iron door, and finally striding away across the fields towards his Castle of Gower, his hands clasped behind his back and his face bent towards the ground.

As for Kate, she could hardly eat or sleep. She skipped as she went, and even on the way to the kirk in the evening, her feet moved lightly as to a dancing measure.

But I was none so well content. It was enough for Kate that she should be with the man she loved. Indeed she considered nothing else of the least importance. Now all would be right.—Rupert's father was appeased, or appeared to be so. He had called Rupert her husband—herself his wife. What did it matter whither she was going—so that at her journey's end she should find him whom her soul loved?

But upon one thing I had set my mind like iron. If it were only to be as they said—a separation for a time—a temporary sequestration owing to her state of health and family circumstances, all the more reason that Kate must not be allowed to go alone. John Glendonwyn knew nothing of the matter. I had sworn not to reveal it either to my father or to him. I mistrusted all the others concerned. I would not have given a nameless cur into such hands—to Rupert, to Surgeon Warner, or to Gregory Glendonwyn of the cold, grey, and impenetrable eye.

No, I had this fixed in my mind. It might be necessary for Kate to go away for a time, and indeed, even I saw no other way out of it when it was put before me. But—I should go, too. And to that end I began with what care and secrecy I could muster, to prepare for the journey. I had put together some clothes and necessities—a book or two, without which I should

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have been lost indeed. Also I made Kate swear not on any account to be persuaded to depart without telling me. And I knew that she would keep her promise—not only because I made her swear to do so by her love for Rupert, but because I myself took an oath that if she did not, I should have my father and brothers on her track within an hour.

Now all this seems strange and even cruel to set down in writing. But often I was so put to it that I knew not what to do. I had no one to consult. I daresay most other people would have done better, but at any rate this was the best my poor intellect could contrive.

Finally all these things drew to a climax on the afternoon of a certain chill-blowing day, when the April dust was blowing in misty clouds along every highway, whitening the horses and vehicles, and making the passersby like flour-millers as they padded past through the blinding stour.

The square-set man in grey brought a note to my schoolroom. It has, I believe, already been given in these memoirs. But as it comes into my story, I transcribe it again. It said:

"The carriage will be waiting at four o'clock. Walk out along the Drumfern Road till you meet it. The driver will have a blue ribbon-knot on his whip and the same about his hat. He will stop when you hold up your left hand. It will be best not to wait for F.'s return from school. After that, trust all to me."

I studied it carefully, the hum of the children growing louder about me as I knit my brows over the curt surprising sentences. On this occasion I dismissed the pupils without a closing hymn, hurried on my cloak, and, holding the letter in my hand, as I glanced it over, I came rapidly to a number of conclusions,

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most of which were afterward verified by experience. First, I judged that the letter was written by Rupert Glendonwyn, but at the dictation of his father. The handwriting showed the first; the care and precision of statement the second. Next, it was obvious that it had been intended that my sister should be smuggled away without my knowledge. But Kate, true to her promise, and in spite of the hint conveyed in the letter itself, had sent it on to me—not being able to trust herself to write.

Thirdly, fourthly and hundredthly, I had no time to lose.

I was still studying the document when a sharp gust of wind came and snatched it from my fingers. I ran my best to recover it, but the wind being high, in a moment it was sailing high among the chimneys and tiled gables of the Academy. I was thus compelled to abandon it and hurry as fast as I could out over the bridge and along the Drumfern Road. Kate, I knew, would at the same moment be coming towards me as if along another side of a triangle. We would meet at the apex—that is, the carriage, where one of us was expected and the other—*not!*

At last drawing clear of the houses and in great fear that after all I would get there too late, I took to running as hard as I could. Thank God, there was the carriage! I could see it waiting—the driver, a tall man in a blue pilot coat and muffled to the eyes, was sitting on the box. The carriage was empty, but there, —not two hundred yards away, was Kate, coming along the roadside towards it. She scarcely looked at me. She did not speak at all, but threw a parcel she carried under her great cloak into the carriage and sank down fainting on the cushions.

The door closed of itself—but with me inside. I heard the wheels grind on the fresh laid macadam as I turned to restore my sister. And so long was I in

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succeeding that the swift-coming darkness of a stormy night was fast settling down, when I again looked out. Bleak stone dykes, the snow still lying behind them in the unsunned places, closed us in on either hand. We were out on a wild moor, going I knew not whither.

XX

INTO A NEW WORLD

I HAD need of all my boasted coolness in the face of difficult circumstances that night and the next day. For a time I could discern the great hill of Bennanbrack between me and the sky, which made a friendly sort of landmark for me. But soon the night grew so dark that I could distinguish nothing but the blur of the trees as they spun past the windows, and once we came to a kind of gloomy well of darkness between houses where we changed horses—or, so at least it seemed. All I could make out was just that we were making our way rapidly into the less frequented westerly parts of the country. And all the way over the vast moors we passed no lighted house, while trees waxed fewer and fewer, and soon ceased altogether.

Had I not known that we were in this safeguarded land of Scotland with judges and tribunals, Christian kirks and gospel ministers, I might have thought that we were being driven to our doom by the emissaries of some secret conspiracy.

Once I heard a dog bark, at an upland farm or herd's house, and the relief was simply inexpressible to me, which shows more clearly than anything the state of my nerves. As for Kate, she slept like a top. The thought that at last she was going to meet her husband—to be with him always (as she supposed) acted on her like wine. She lay most of the night sleeping peacefully with her head on my shoulder. Once she

kissed me lightly on the neck and murmured a few contented little love-words in my ear—to me now infinitely pathetic to be remembered.

My poor darling—was ever such a treasure of pearls cast before swine? And to think what a good man might have had in your love!

I have come since to understand many things which were then dark to me. For instance, how it came about that after travelling at a rapid rate—I calculated eight miles an hour—all night with, at any rate, two changes of horses, we should still be within so comparatively short a distance of the place whence we started. I should have supposed that we had travelled not less than sixty miles. It turned out to be not more than a fourth part of that number.

I think however that the true explanation is this:

The whole journey had been carefully arranged beforehand. Relays were forwarded to one place, past which we drove two or three times during the course of the night, making a circuit and returning for the purpose of making us believe ourselves far away and cut off by immense distances from our friends. I can conceive no other purpose which Gregory Glendonwyn can have had in so endeavouring to mislead us.

Towards the end I also grew weary and I think, must have slept a considerable time. For when I awaked the carriage had stopped and I was stiff with the cold. I touched Kate on the arm, lightly at first, but as she still slumbered on, I had perforce to shake her before I could rouse her up.

Her first words were, "Where is Rupert?"

Without replying I opened the carriage door and stepped out awkwardly enough, being numb with long travelling. Day was breaking and showed a strange scene of desolation, more fit, as it seemed to me, to be a landscape in Iceland, Lapland, Siberia, or some of

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those northern countries I had read about, than a part of that Scotland in which I knew we must still be.

A sea grey and melancholy was breaking heavily and sullenly on a shore of black morass, seamed inland with innumerable water-courses, filled evidently at high water but now mere winding channels of mud and ooze. The whole heath-covered face of the land had evidently been burned with fire at some not distant date. Indeed to the northward certain low hills (which were all I could distinguish) appeared still aglow in places with the embers of the conflagration.

There was one hut and no more upon that dismal beach—a mere rough shelter (as it seemed) for fishermen or smugglers. The bare keel and ribs of a wrecked vessel rose blackly out of the sludge, and near it, at the bottom of the widest of these trenches (in which there was still a little runnel of water), I could see the figure of a man busy with a boat with a kind of rude pier. The horses had been removed from the carriage and we could see them in silhouette against the dreary dawn in a kind of shelter behind the hut, tossing their heads and moving uneasily in the cold wind of morning.

"I do not see Rupert," said Kate, after she had looked all round the disconsolate scene, shivering slightly all the while, "surely this cannot be the place to which they are taking us!"

"Follow me and we will soon find out!" I said, briskly. For the eternal cuckoo-cry of "Rupert" set me on edge sometimes, especially so early in the morning and, as it were, breakfastless.

But as we began to walk briskly along the irregular path, the man who had been occupied with the boat espied us, and leaving his work came up to meet us. As we came nearer we recognised him.

It was Mr. Glendonwyn himself.

His face looked sterner than ever. For the fatigues

of the night had caused it to take on an ashen, corpse-like hue, out of which his small grey eyes looked, with the curious mobility of living eyes from behind a mask.

But he raised his hat to the full as politely as before. For in nothing did Gregory Glendonwyn fail, save in the commonest sorts of humanity. And I could not but admire the intrepidity of the man who at his age had undertaken a task so exhausting as this.

"We must leave as soon as the water has advanced a stage higher at the pier," he said. "Our destination is yonder!"

He lifted his hand and pointed to a faint blue cloud which stretched itself against the brightening horizon. "That island belongs to me, and there are good and kind people upon it. I have used it myself as a refuge for many years and have always found it an isle of peace. So, I trust, may you."

I told him that I would like to write to my father, that I might set his mind at rest. Upon this proposition Mr. Glendonwyn took a while to consider, and at last gave his consent, but only upon condition that he should see and approve what I wrote.

"Otherwise," he said, "it will be obvious to you that the whole advantage of our arrangement might be thrown away. Complete secrecy as to your retreat is our only hope."

I had in fact to write the note which finally went to my father from Drumfern, no less than three times before I could find a form of words which was acceptable to our guide. Kate never opened her mouth once during these negotiations, save to ask when Rupert would be well enough to come to her. The reply which Mr. Glendonwyn gave was reassuring though somewhat evasive. The young man would follow as soon as his medical adviser thought it safe—that was the gist of it. Whereat Kate sighed and became silent.

The letter to my father was written in the com-

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fortless shelter of the hut in which were only a rude slab for a table and some packing-boxes for seats. But I had been able to light a fire with some newly-invented phosphorus matches which Mr. Glendonwyn carried with him, and which I struck upon a piece of glass paper. He also brought some provisions from the carriage and we ate all together—Rupert's father sitting opposite to us in thick blue pilot-cloth coat, wide trousers like a sailor's, and a huge knitted comforter about his neck.

In an hour he announced that the time of our departure had arrived. It was now clear day, and we could look about us upon the bleak, unkindly landscape. I for my part thought it dreary enough. But Kate on the other hand saw only Rupert and his coming in all, and stepped with a great deal of courage and assurance into the little sailing-boat which was to convey us to our destination.

Mr. Glendonwyn rowed with ease and vigour, till we came to the mouth of the little winding river which somewhat gingerly felt its way down through these sullen marshes to the sea. As soon however as we began to feel the life of the salt water, he shipped his oars and began to set a small lug-sail—which, having been well taught in water-lore by my brother Will, I was glad to be able to help him to raise.

And nothing shows more clearly the great change which had come over my poor Kate than this, that she who before had never been a moment idle and who had ever been the most eager to handle oar or sail, should now be content to sit idly by, looking out over the water without any apparent interest in what we were doing or whither we were going. And the reason of that I knew not then, though afterwards it was plentifully and pitifully plain to me.

It was a matter of three hours before we landed on the island, which all the while had been gradually

rising before us across the water—a long, low, exteriorly desolate, sand-duny place with a fringe of sand and pebbles all round it, a plantation or two cowering under shaggy heathery heights of rock and boulder, and a vast cackle and clamour of sea birds circling and screaming about it everywhere. As we drew round a spit of sand over which the waves were breaking white, we came in sight of a long low building, grey, ruinous, and weather-beaten of aspect, from which an ancient square tower rose, backed by great trees and overgrown with ivy. From the sea it appeared to be roofless and desolate, and the jackdaws rose in a cloud protesting against our intrusion as we came nearer.

I tried in vain to recall the aspect of the map of Scotland at this point. But the curriculum of a teacher's education, as insisted on at that day, made me more familiar with the coast lines of Terra del Fuego and Van Dieman's Land than with those of my own province. Besides the island was a mere speck, little more than half a mile in breadth, and on such maps as I had seen it would certainly never be marked. At any rate I had not the least idea where it was, or what might be the ancient buildings I could discern upon it.

With no inconsiderable skill Mr. Glendonwyn presently brought us up at a rude pier similar in construction to that which we had left on the mainland. Here we made fast. The sail was taken down and we stepped ashore, Mr. Glendonwyn carrying our slender effects. For, as I say, in the smaller courtesies he left nothing to be desired.

There was a boat-house near by (as I was at first glad to notice). but the iron door was locked and in addition secured with a stout padlock and chain. We took our way among sea-holly and star-wort, thrift and water plantain, skirting heathery hillocks and benty warrens over which the rabbits skurried and

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where the sea-birds were beginning to nest, in the direction of the ancient and ruinous building which we had observed from the sea.

At first I thought the place wholly deserted, for nothing was to be seen but a plain ridge of ancient stone and lime broken at the top, and, above it the grey stone and lime jackdaw's tower or keep. But Mr. Glendonwyn went on steadily, following a path which every step grew plainer, till we turned an archway and found ourselves by one of those quick surprises which always affect my spirits with pleasure, in a small well-kept plot of the greenest grass, now all aflame with Lent lilies and the slender nodding of daffodils. And whereas without, we had seen only the grey crumbling wall rude as a stone dyke, the lime mouldered away by the salt damp of the sea air, behold within was a little whitewashed house with its back to the ruined keep, white blinds to all the windows—three above and two below, with a door painted a light green like those you see on shores of Highland lochs!

And in the doorway stood a good sonsy well-put-on Scottish dame, smiling and nodding her head as if well-pleased to welcome us. This surely could be no prison, but a refuge indeed.

After shaking hands Mr. Glendonwyn made some signal and the woman pointed out over her shoulder in the direction of the dark heathery crest of the isle. I understood him to inquire as to the whereabouts of some third person.

"Old Jonet is deaf and dumb," he said, turning about to us, "but you will find her both kind and attentive. I brought her and her husband, Hamish McColl, from the Highlands many years ago, to keep this island for me. You will not want for anything, I trust, while you are in their hands. I have made every preparation for a somewhat lengthened stay. Indeed,

I habitually keep most of the necessities of life here, as my own visits are made at uncertain intervals and generally without warning."

The old woman shook hands with us, patting Kate's arm affectionately, and repeatedly touching her own mouth with her finger-tips, as if to say that she was sorry she could not talk to us.

"She understands something of the finger language, however," Mr. Glendonwyn went on, "but neither she nor her husband have much English beyond that which will enable them to understand what you want. Hamish is my shepherd, a man in whom I trust, and find altogether dependable. He will convey any message to me that you may think it necessary that I should have. But I must warn you that he has his orders, and will neither permit you to leave the island without communicating with me nor forward any letter or message except through my hands. For the rest, I think you will have no reason to complain."

Without entering the house or asking for any refreshments, he held out his hand in farewell.

"I will now take my leave," he said. "For it is essential that this letter should be sent to your father immediately. My service to you, ladies. I think you will find your enforced retirement not wholly disagreeable."

And the next moment we were watching his long active legs carry him down towards the pier, where presently, from the outer gateway of the ancient abbey, we saw a figure join him.

XXI

THE ISLE OF INCH JONET

AND indeed Mr. Glendonwyn had some right to his opinion. For within, the house was admirably equipped, and to me at least its outside disrepair and quaint antiquity rather heightened the *bien* sense of comfort within. Indeed, but for the fear that we were distressing our friends by our absence, there was no suffering of any kind connected with our stay on the island. Jonet McColl showed us over the rooms, with housewifely pride. First, on the ground floor was a good-sized sitting-room with a window opening upon the garden or court-yard. On the other side of the narrow passage was a dining-room with guns and fishing-rods in racks. To these Kate instantly turned her eyes and taking the dumb woman in hand, tried to spell out the letters of Rupert's name with hope gleaming in her eyes. But either Jonet did not understand or she had her orders. Not from her would we find out whether or not Rupert had ever been upon the isle. Nor did we find her husband, when he came in. much more communicative.

Hamish McColl proved not to be a man to waste words on any subject—a yellow-faced, scrub-bearded, middle-aged Celt the ruddy hue of whose hair was invaded and modified by a certain grizzled grey which gave the effect of imperfectly applied whitewash.

I asked Hamish the name of the place. He appeared to experience a difficulty in understanding the bearing

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of the query. But at last he answered "It is the maister's island—no mine!"

"Well then, Hamish," I said, "what does your 'maister' call it?"

"He never called it onything in particular that I mind on," was the answer.

"But what is the name on the letters that come?" I persisted.

"There's nae letters ever comes to—this island," he spoke the words slowly, as if each had to find its way unassisted through the grizzled scrub of his beard.

I was nonplussed, and for the moment could contrive no other leading question. I rallied, however, sufficiently to ask, "What shall I call it when I speak of it?"

"Caa' it 'The Island'!" he said, "what ails ye at that?"

I thought that I caught a saving gleam of humour in Hamish's eye, and I cried, clapping my hands, "I have it—we will call it Inch Jonet!"

So Inch Jonet it was as long as we abode there.

But the incoming of Hamish, and our discussion (together with my complete and acknowledged defeat) on the question of the name of the island, have interrupted my description of the rest of the house. The kitchen premises were to the back—carved out of the ruins of the ancient Priory or "Holy Hoose" as Jonet called it upon her fingers. A new "Carron" stove looked curiously out of place among the half-effaced slabs of ancient tombs and low rounded arches of the abbey chapel.

Above, there were three bedrooms reserved for our use, two of which opened out of each other and looked upon the court, while the other had a little window looking over the sea, and a door which led out upon the top of the jackdaws' tower, where from a stone gallery there was a marvellous view of the distant coasts and

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the sweeping miles of blue waves. Inch Jonet itself, shaped almost like a willow leaf, lay beneath, grey green and dark purple for the most part, but with a scatter of grey granite boulders here and there with white sheep couching in lee of them. Then came an edging of foam dazzlingly white, a coffee-coloured tumble of sea over the long tail of the sandbar, and then again the sea, running foam-flecked and wing-sprinkled to the white horizon.

It did just look like that, and I think I am very clever to remember and set down so exactly. But John laughs and says that is my essay style, and that I do it better when I write about the white hen which hatched sixteen chickens and reared eleven. But this I hold to be plain jealousy, because he writes so much and (he thinks) so learnedly.

Now at this point I must at any rate tell about one day out of our lives, while we lived so peacefully upon Inch Jonet. Our minds were pretty easy—or at least mine was. For every fortnight Hamish crossed to the mainland for supplies, and took over the letter to my father, which Mr. Glendonwyn had promised to forward. I know now that these never got further than the study fire at Castle Gower. But I did not know that then, and so rested fairly comfortable in my mind. I had the good conscience that I was doing the best I could for Kate—who in so strange a manner had been committed to me. As for myself, if any thought the worse of me for what I was doing, they were entirely welcome. I had the best of reasons for knowing that there were *some* who would not.

I should like to describe, not one of those occasions when Mr. Rupert came to disturb our peaceful occupation of Inch Jonet, but one of our quiet days. For at first he came pretty frequently, though as the months drew on his visits waxed rarer and rarer and at last, as I shall have to tell they ceased altogether.

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Yet even when he was most pleasant and Kate happiest, it was always an infinite pleasure to me to see him off from the pier—Hamish pulling a great round fisherman's stroke like the hoop of a basket, and Mr. Rupert sitting in the stern, beautiful as a god, kissing his hand to Kate, and waving easy adieux to "Mademoiselle," as he never ceased to call me.

But there were long days and high days and happy days for all that on Inch Jonet. I set myself as I had never set myself before to any study or examination—(no, not even to that of the Latin grammar, most superior sir!) to the task of making Kate happy from morning to night. And to this extent I succeeded; that if she did not think less about Rupert Glendonwyn, she began at least to take a greater interest in preparing for the future. Her eyes were now forever fixed on the line of the distant shore, and she could pass the boathouse without turning aside to see if by any unlooked-for chance it had been left unlocked.

There was a good library at Inch Jonet, that is, for so small a house. Indeed I spent every evening and many of the mornings in reading, while Kate was at her seam. There were all Sir Walter's novels, in the old little handy three-deckers, very many volumes of the Gentleman's Magazine, Gibbon's History, Boswell's Johnson, and what pleased me as much as anything and afforded endless pleasure to my sister—complete sets of "Hogg's Instructor," together with "Bentley's" and the tall earlier volumes of "Chambers' Journal."

Besides these, Hamish would generally bring back some newer books—generally books of travel, from Castle Gower. For it must be remembered that it was not till the last months of our stay that our keepers showed themselves in their true colours. For these we were grateful indeed, and even a certain vixenish "Mademoiselle" returned to Mr. Rupert by the next

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packet thanks which were not altogether a matter of form.

In addition to this it was my study to keep Kate so constantly in the open air that she should sleep soundly at nights and rest as long as possible in the morning. Indeed sleep she did and that infinitely sounder and longer than I. Often I was out by four-of-the-clock. For in June and July it is scarcely ever dark there, and, so, even if I chanced to awaken very early, it was no hardship to walk on the hard close-felted turf of Inch Jonet, the rabbits all safe in their holes, and nothing but the sheep moving restlessly about or lying down with a sigh like a tired man, only to rise again in five minutes, and fall again to their *champ-champing* and *crop-cropping*.

It was the pleasure of my life (or rather one of them) to teach Kate as much of birds and flowers as I knew myself, which indeed at that time was no very great deal. But by a peculiar mercy, there was in the dining room under the great sideboard three tall volumes of "Curtis's Flora Londonensis," the more ancient edition with all the plates coloured. This I studied diligently, and was soon able to identify the plants which we found during our daytime ramblings.

Generally I managed matters so that Kate should find the flower or herb, and it was to bring this about naturally that I first took to these morning strolls which in time grew so dear to me. Then also I could think undisturbed about my father and John, and all the things which were to be or might be. Most of what I planned with so much care on Inch Jonet turned out quite differently, but all the same the exercise pleased me at the time. And indeed I did not trouble myself very much about the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of my prophecies.

And oh; above all, the freshness of the time. I used to steal to the door of her bedroom after I had dressed

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me, and listen to Kate's quiet breathing, sometimes even venturing to steal in and close the shutters lest the light in her face should awake her. For we slept with the windows open in that fine far-carried air and genial summer weather.

Then with a bounding heart I would slip out (Hamish and his deaf wife being withdrawn to their den in the mysterious back parts of the ancient abbey in rear of the kitchen) and, shutting in the collies behind me, lest their bounding should scare the sea-birds, I would set myself to spy out the abounding richness of the land.

There, above me, were the gannets already hard at it all the way from Ailsa, which they must have left betimes indeed—turning on their backs at sight of some “ferlie” in the water, falling plump like a stone and sending a great jet of water straight up, leaping out again, bolting their prey, and then anon heavily taking wing for yet another plunge.

Sea-mews, gulls, and terns mingled their screams, and truth to tell I never heard a concert that I liked better. Sweeter was the noise to me than any nightingales that I have since heard singing on the vine-terraces of France or among the gardens of Como.

The sea-swallows flashed and dipped, snatching a fish from the water without diving, deftly as a martin flirts its wing in a pool. Long, low, and black of hull the pirate skua swept out of its robber hold, and dashing with the curves of a skater upon the sea-swallows or demure white kittiwakes, forced them to disgorge for its benefit a portion of their prey. Gulls laughed variously in stertorous snatches—the great black-backed loudly and scornfully, tyrant of its kind, calling its “*Kree-kree! Kree-kree!*” while up from the sand-bar came the keen crying of the terns at strife with the sand-lances. Herring-gulls and green-billed gulls laughed more softly, like courtiers in the presence of the great.

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And from the ruined tower ever and anon impertinent jack-daws shot out on futile chase of some passing sea-bird, which, though infinitely more powerful, still avoided them; as a big dog might step aside from the yelping onset of a terrier.

All this somehow eased my mind and made me glad. For I cannot say that I was unhappy on the Isle of Inch Jonet. I knew that I was doing my duty. Until the fulness of the time I could do no more. Kate was my charge as surely as if she had been committed to me by our dear mother. Also I had time to think, which, in the press of study and work, I never seemed to have had in all my life before.

Day by day therefore we went to and fro searching for plants—rock plants, sea-kale, whorled caraway, pale butterwort, green sea plectranthus and filmy fern, nested in soft mossy places hard to find, and harder still to reach when found.

These and other treasure-troves were a continual delight to Kate, and I never revealed the fact that in the earliest morning I had marked down most of the coveys. It was, besides, the greatest of pleasures to me to see her pale cheek glow as we came upon some treasure hitherto undiscovered. We left the root to bloom again another year, carrying away for our portfolio only the flower and stem, with perhaps (for we were not too virtuous) a seed or two. It is impossible to tell the distraction and occupation all this made for my dear sister, and how the constant change and open-air exercise kept her from brooding upon her troubles.

We had always breakfast in the kitchen, with sometimes not a little laughter in trying to make old Jonet understand our meaning by dint of fingerplay and choosing such scant words of English as she understood.

Then out again to the copses or along the shore with baskets and canisters! Sometimes we would

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bathe in the clear green water to the westward of the bar, at a place where the fine gravel ran far down in a regular slope. Coming back we ate purple dulse from the walls of a little cavern and the clean astringent taste of it in the mouth comes back to me still unblunted across the years. I could go to the place yet.

Out upon the crown of the island we sallied next to watch the wheeling and plunging sea-birds and to dry our hair in a bath of sunshine. How long and rich Kate's was—as it blew about her in a glory, quite putting to shame my poor seaweedy tangle of tow.

In the afternoons I read aloud, mostly in some sheltered nook, while Kate worked or with the most exquisite neatness laid down on cardboard the plants which had been pressed and dried. I felt more hope that her old self would revive, from the interest she took in this diversion than from anything else—her swift delicate handicraft and natural taste helping her to make little pictures out of many of our treasures.

In the evening we walked again by the shore, often till the sun went down and the stars came out, for I would force myself to tire my sister out that she might sleep naturally, and so pass the night which was what I dreaded most for her.

Thus it was when we were alone. And how much sweeter to me than when Mr. Rupert came! Somehow I could not accept the fact that he was indeed Kate's husband and that she loved him. For me, I never trusted him from the moment I set eyes upon him. Perhaps I was jealous of Kate's loving him, and besides he was forever sneering at John and making compliments, often double-edged, to me. But this is neither time nor place to be bitter. The months were drifting to the culmination, the bright days running all too swiftly through the sandglass. Mr. Rupert's visits grew fewer and shorter. Yet, strange as it may seem, Kate appeared not to miss him so greatly, nor to

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yearn for him so overpoweringly as at first. Another love was beginning to stir in her heart.

And so—and so—and so—till the empty hour-glass turned of its own accord and one stormy night in late autumn there was heard on Inch Jonet, mingling with the crash of the waves on the beach and the trumpet clang of the wild swans going southward in their ordered files, that most unmistakable and thrilling of human sounds—the crying of a child just born into the world.

And as I stood trembling and greatly afraid in the little passage which leads to my own chamber, the English surgeon Warner laid in my arms a baby boy.

“The heir of Castle Gower!” he said with a strange smile. “Take good care of him, Miss Fairlie! If I mistake not, he will need it!”

“God helping me, I mean to! And of his mother also!” I made answer.

And I think I have kept my word.

XXII

AN IDOL NIGH THE BREAKING

“**P**ERHAPS for a good man one would even dare to die.” The word is true. And thousands of women every day prove it to demonstration, putting their lives in peril each time that the child of expectation enters the house of love.

But for a bad man—ah, there is the blackness, the bitterness! And I do not conceal that for me Fairlie Glendinning, the fair world was overcast, the sky permanently darkened, during these hours. I could have cursed God that He had looked on from His high, safe heaven and permitted such things to be.

My Kate—my sister!—How I prayed out there in the darkness, fronting the tempest on the island brow, praying that the bitter cup first brewed in Eden might pass quickly from her. How I trembled and shook more with anger than fear, when I had to give her up into the hands of Warner and old dumb Jonet. I had been strong before, but now I felt all the pitiful weakness of girlhood. The tears rained down as I besought even the poor dumb woman to cherish my darling. And never was I so foolish in my own estimation as when, understanding perfectly, she petted me, and with smiles and little kindly touches bade me be of good cheer.

But when at last the day emerged out of darkness, and I saw Hamish take the news and Surgeon Warner together across the ferry, I could have danced for very joy. Kate herself was given back to me.—The dazed

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and fascinated look seemed quite gone out of her eyes. A sweeter smile, a more gracious manner—womanhood in a word, had come to her as she lay with her babe on her arm, still, chill, and slow-breathing, re-born to me out of a great weakness and the valley of the shadow of death.

Never was there a better nurse than this good, old, voice-bereft Jonet proved herself. I was so glad that I could have hugged her every five minutes, but since she was always busy with mother or child, the caress seemed as much as my life was worth. To her I could not speak—to Kate I must not. Books were vain things. So as a last resort I betook myself to wait for old Hamish's return upon the pier, where I was standing, wind-blown of skirt and hair, when the old man came back.

I was ready for him as soon as he stepped ashore, and putting my arms about his neck (for I felt I must hug somebody) I cried, "Oh, I am so glad!"

"Here, let be, hands aff—deil's i' the lass!" was Hamish's uncomplimentary rejoinder, "ken ye no I am a marriet man?"

"I know, Hamish," I said, meekly, "but Jonet won't mind. I'll go and ask her, if you like. Tell me, do you think Mr. Rupert will be glad of the news?"

"Mr. Rupert, Mr. Rupert?" he repeated, going on very composedly with the chaining of his boat, "what micht Mr. Rupert hae to do wi' the bairn?"

"Why, it is his own son and heir," I cried indignantly, "my sister is his wife. You know that very well!"

"*Ech!*" said the shepherd unemotionally, "ow, aye, —dootless! But ye see it's nane o' Hamish's business."

"I wonder if he will come to-morrow?" I went on, for it seemed as if I must ask of somebody the questions which were troubling my own heart.

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"I wonder!" remarked Hamish, untying a knot with his teeth.

"Perhaps Mr. Glendonwyn will come—or even Mr. —Mr. John—," I continued, "perhaps now he is settled in his parish, they will tell him the secret!"

"Maybes!" said Hamish, turning his quid over in his mouth.

"Oh, Hamish," I cried, "you are so disappointing. You will answer me nothing. And you could help us so much, Hamish, if you would only be kind—and without doing harm to any one."

The silent Highlander meditated a while on this; and then with a staccato utterance and a curious movement of the mouth as if he were chewing the words before uttering them, he said, "*He-aah*, ass far as he kens, Hamish McColl is peyed to look after the sheep, to row the bit boatie yonder, and to keep his tongue frae meddling in what doesna concern him."

And so without heat or manifesting the least feeling, he betook himself through the little copse in the direction of the long low peatstack which he was slowly rearing on the moor to be fuel for the winter's fire of Inch Jonet.

Whereat I was so much subdued that I actually ran after him crying, "Let me come with you, Hamish, and I promise not to ask any questions."

"Hoots, lassie," said Hamish, with the most perfect aplomb, "dinna strain yoursel'. Nane o' your kind were ever able to accomplish that, frae the time o' Eve even unto this day! Speer a' the questions that come into your heid. Only gin it please ye, dinna compel puir Hamish to answer them, that's a'!"

"Oh, *how* I wish I could compel you, Hamish," I cried, "I don't know any way to do it!"

He appeared to revolve the query earnestly for a good minute and then replied, "Troth, an' I dinna ken either!"

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So for hours each day Hamish and I betook ourselves to and fro over the whole face of the island. For though within doors I was allowed to do many little things for my sister, these must not be immediately connected, as it were, with the technique of the situation. For Jonet brooked no interference within her own province.

After we had grown to be great friends I complimented Hamish on the abilities of his wife.

"Aweel, aye, and ye may say that," he answered, "man, there's a hale glen-fu' o' fowk up i' the north that oor Jonet has brocht intil a world o' sin an' wickedness."

These being the first religious-sounding words I had ever heard Hamish speak, it came into my head to ask him how it was that he never went to the kirk. He paused to spit in a thoughtful manner at a rabbit which was cocking one inquisitive eye at us out of a neighbouring hole. (The heathery sand of the isle was riddled with them.) The projectile hit the mark. The rabbit disappeared, and then with his quiet, slow-irradiating Celtic smile Hamish delivered himself.

"There's nane o' my kind aboot here," he said, cautiously.

"What is your kind?"

Again the slow smile. From a back entrance of his mansion the rabbit prospected cautiously. Hamish discharged his piece the second time and made another bunny's-eye.

"In my last place when the minister cam' to see me, I was a rank Papisher," he said, "and when I saw the priest—faith, I belanged to the parish kirk. The twa didna speak."

"But I thought that all Highlanders were very religious," I remonstrated.

Then he gave me an answer which showed that he

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knew a great deal more of our concerns than Kate and I had previously given him credit for.

"Wha might be the maist releegious-minded man ye ken o' lassie?"

"Why, my father!" said I, instantly. For in spite of his harum-scarum talking, so he was—and is to this day.

"And how often," asked Hamish quietly, "has David Glendinning been within a kirk door during the last ten year?"

The twinkle of victory told me that I did not need to answer the question. Then he smiled again.

"Maybe your faither and auld Hamish are mainly o' the same releegion," he said. "We wad raither spend the Sabbath day in readin' what we do believe than in listenin' to what we dinna!"

Now I had grown to see that this crusty old Hamish read much in his Gaelic Bible as he rested in the house on Sabbath day, or sat out on some "tap" whence he could see the sheep dotted like gowans on the far green slopes and the scarce whiter sails of ships flecking the distant blue.

Now it came into my mind to try once more to gain a friend in the house of the enemy. If Hamish were a religious man surely he would not lend himself to be the instrument of abominable wrong-doing and oppression. I meant to do the best for Kate, but I soon found out how far I had mistaken my man.

"I do not ken," Hamish said slowly, after listening to my story, "what the maister means to do, nor do I ken or care what the richts and the wrangs o' the case may be. But what I do ken is this—when Roy McColl McAlister o' Cleishterran bade me faithfully to serve my new maister on this island, he said nocht about richts and wrangs, bairns, lasses, marrying or giving in marriage.—Na! what he laid his tongue to

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was juist this—‘Do what your maister bids ye as lang as he pays ye your wages. And gin he has nae siller to pay your wages, serve him juist the same—because I, Roy McColl McAlister o’ Cleishterran, bid ye. Keep coont o’ the sheep, and the kye, and the deer—gin ye hae ony in that God-forsaken country, fear God, and never set up your whuskey-still whaur the gauger will find it!’”

And this comprehended Hamish’s entire decalogue and confession of faith from which it was wholly impossible to move him.

Meantime Kate mended quickly and in about a week she could be moved to the open window in my room, which she preferred because she was able to look across the water, in the direction of the landing-place where Rupert would take boat to see his babe and hers.

Each day she sat there a little longer, gazing wistfully out to sea, but with more of her old winsome hopefulness showing in her face. For she would *coo-roo* to the child and talk to it by the hour. How it was the loveliest baby—its own father’s own son! How pleased Rupert would be—she could hardly wait to show baby to him! A thousand times a day she appealed to me. I could only agree. Rupert would be pleased indeed. It was no time to dally over phrases—though in my heart I feared that the new disappointment might drive her back into her old dazed indifference.

Nevertheless Hamish had gone twice to the mainland and twice returned with empty excuses—the lame leg still inflamed and painful, summoned to Drumfern by urgent business, friends arrived unexpectedly to visit him—all before Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn thought it worth while to visit Inch Jonet to kiss wife and child.

Bitter as I knew the meeting would be for Kate, I

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was glad when old Jonet took me out to the ruined gateway of the priory, to see the young man just landed from Hamish's boat at the pier. I hastened to Kate and bade her put on her prettiest gown, while Jonet arrayed the babe in its long-prepared lace and fine linen.

Kate was sitting up with the babe in her arms when Rupert came in, a sweeter picture of young motherly grace than my eyes had ever seen before—aye, or since. She held up the babe to be dandled, her own pale face to be kissed. How could any man resist that mute appeal, that adoring glance? *He* was come—Kate's universe was full.

"Is he not lovely? Kiss him, Rupert!" she cried, clapping her hands to see him hold the child—manlike and gingerly as if it would break.

Rupert Glendonwyn with a rueful countenance bent his head down upon that of his son. Then he kissed Kate again, still with his bold eyes uncomfortably averted. Being what I knew him to be, I was noways astonished that the spectacle of so much innocence and purity abashed Mr. Rupert. He sat down silently on a chair near the window, but Kate soon summoned him to her, happily smiling.

"Come and sit by me, Rupert," she said, "I am strong. See, I can hold baby all by myself. You think he will tire me. Well, you shall have him for five minutes, no more. Then you must give him back to me. He is so precious, you know—that his mother cannot do without him—no, not for a minute. But she will lend him to you while she counts a hundred—because you are his father, but to no one else in all the world!"

So Rupert had perforce to sit beside his wife and knowing that I was watching him, he put a strong constraint upon himself, and began to talk with some appearance of goodwill—of the beauty of the babe, of

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his own unfortunate accident, of the slowness of Warner's cure, and especially of the terrible straits to which if relief did not come soon his father and he would be put for money.

Kate listened exactly so long as he praised the babe. Her attention flagged even when he spoke of himself, and when it came to the subject of his father's difficulties, she fell to playing with the boy, nestling her face down into the puckered fist which represented his features, separating his toes and kissing the little pink buttons one by one, cooing all the while that natural baby-talk which, though she may never have laid tongue to it before, comes so briskly and certainly to the lips of a young mother.

All the time, however, I could see Mr. Rupert growing perceptibly uneasy. More than once he looked at his watch and then glanced aside at me to see if I were observing him. I think he had that sense of angry shame, which a man who would not hesitate to do a wicked or even dishonourable action, feels when he is about to do a mean one.

I could see that he wished to have an interview with his wife alone—in order, as I anticipated, that he might be able to get her consent to some arrangement disadvantageous to her, to which he knew I would never agree. His continual references to the family difficulties pointed that way. As also the numerous errands which he invented in order to get me out of the room, even for a moment. But by this time I had established a working code of signals with old Jonet, and I could summon her to our chambers by means of an ingenious arrangement. It so happened that the kitchen window opened immediately beneath mine and had been fortified with outside shutters of wood, because it was one of the few which faced the fierce blast from the sea. By means of a simple pulley and cord, then, I was able to close these shutters at any time, which Jonet, busy

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about her domestic duties, understood as a signal that we or the precious babe had need of her above stairs.

So without rising I made use of this contrivance and summoned Jonet to bring Mr. Rupert what he wanted, very much (as I was rejoiced to think) to his own chagrin.

"Mademoiselle is of a mechanical genius," he said, sneeringly enough.

But having won the trick I only smiled placidly and awaited his next move.

He put the matter more boldly when next he spoke.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "will you permit me to have a few minutes' private conversation alone with my wife? I have something to say to her which concerns herself and our future."

Kate raised her head from the babe, in surprise at his change of tone.

"Do you want to speak to me, Rupert?" she said, "why, of course Fairlie will go—Auntie Fairlie, yes, you darling! You know you must learn to call her that as soon as you can speak. For she is the very dearest and best of aunties—and I don't know what I should have done without her."

But I had a different complexion to put on things, and was resolved that everything concerning the future of my sister or her child should be done openly and above board.

"No," I said, firmly, setting myself determinedly to my sewing, "I will *not* leave the room. Enough mischief has been done already by Kate and you having secrets from me. I have surrendered enough and suffered enough to give me a right to share in any plans you may form for my sister or her child. She is still weak and, I consider, in my charge—so long, that is, as you cannot, or will not, give her her proper position in the world as your wife. So say what you have to

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say in my presence, if you please, Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn!"

"This is past bearing," he cried, leaping to his feet, "have you forgotten that you are in this very house on sufferance? You came here without being asked—you stay here against our will—and yet you will not permit me to speak for five minutes alone with my wife!"

"Very likely it is all true," I said, very calmly, "the last accusation certainly is. What you have to say to Kate you must say also to me, unless you propose to call Hamish up and carry me down stairs between you by force!"

At this he tried another tack.

"Mademoiselle," he said, softly, (and when he chose no one had a softer voice or a more winning way with him than Mr. Rupert,) "when people love one another—they do not always wish to show it before all the world——"

"Oh, as to that," said I, "I will sit by the window and turn my back—I can shut my eyes but not my ears!"

Whereupon Kate laughed aloud with perfect unconcern and joyousness quite new to her.

"Why, I will kiss you, Rupert," she said, "before Fairlie or anybody. Who, indeed, has a better right?"

And drawing his face down between her two palms, she kissed him, smiling and nodding over to me with a kind of triumph and defiance exceedingly touching and pretty to see. So (thought I) I have seen children brought to visit a father's grave, sporting about the grave of buried love.

When I looked again Mr. Rupert had left Kate. He was standing erect by the window, frowning and gnawing his moustache. The expression on his face was neither pleasant nor amiable. I think if at that moment he could have slain me with any chance of safety, he would have done it. But I sat and sewed

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with great calmness at the small white garment I was making, looking up occasionally at him. Kate was again wrapt up in her boy.

"Well—what is it? Let us have it!—Out with it!" I said at last. For I was pleased that the game was, as I thought, in my hands.

"I will," he cried, with a quick spurt of anger, "and on your head be the consequences!"

He paced up and down the room with rapid nervous footsteps. I had never seen him so moved before. His bearing was that of a man who was wishful to save himself at any expense of sorrow and pain to others.

Suddenly he stopped, his hands caught behind him as if to nerve himself for what he was about to say.

"I have come to take away the child with me," he said. "My father and I agree that it is for the best——"

Kate sprang to her feet, swift and sudden as a lioness when her cubs are threatened.

"What," she cried, "not from me? He is mine—all I have! And I will keep him."

"Kate," said Mr. Rupert gently, taking her hand, "if your sister had allowed us to speak of the matter alone, I could have showed you—proved to you—better than I can now, that this is a step of the utmost and most immediate necessity to us all."

"Rupert," said Kate, "you can do with *me* what you will, but leave the babe. He is all my comfort—you are so often away—so little with me. He is all I have. And he is growing so like you—I meant to call him after you. Oh, I thought you would be so pleased! And now it is all different—so different!"

And she sobbed upon his shoulder softly and heart-brokenly.

I could see the man nerve himself to go through with that which he had begun. I do not think he was devil-posessed that day—only doggedly doing what he

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had been told to do, obeying the one strong mind whose forcefulness had been able to master and control his. If Kate had ever possessed a tithe of the influence over Mr. Rupert which Gregory Glendonwyn had, they might have been happy together to-day.

"My father wishes to take him away," he said, "and the sooner it is done, the better. It is for your own good too, Kate, for the longer the matter is put off the more you will suffer. Besides, any day the retreat of the island may be penetrated. A vagrant tourist, the crew of a French smack landing to steal a sheep, my good brother John or some other well-intentioned spy from the mainland who has seen Hamish come and go with provisions, or has followed my father or me hither, a word dropped by the old woman at the change-house where we put up the horses—these or any one of them might send us skyhigh. Moreover, merely to have you discovered here would be bad enough—two girls isolated on a lonely island belonging to Mr. Gregory Glendonwyn, but a child also with them would be fatal. The baby will be well provided for, I promise you. My father has promised to see to that."

Kate stood pale as ashes, her fingers clenched upon the back of the chair on which she had been seated. I went to her and as gently as I could compelled her to sit down again.

Then I spoke to her husband.

"And pray, Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn, having obeyed your father and taken the 'baby,' what do you propose to do with us?"

I thought that the shade of shame seemed to grow darker on his face.

"I think," he began, "that is, my father thinks—that is, it has been decided that in the meantime you shall remain upon the Island till an opportunity be found of conveying you to an estate which my father

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possesses in Cumberland, where you may find the babe established on your arrival. For this, however, a larger vessel is required than we have the means of obtaining immediately, having consideration to the necessary privacy."

As he spoke Kate came quite near him and looked into his face. Her hands were clasped nervously before her, her lips and face like marble.

"God knows I would give my life for you, Rupert," she cried, "I have always been ready to do that. I am still. But I must keep the babe. He may soon be all I have. You are slipping away from me, Rupert—I can see that. I can feel it. I do not think it is your fault, but that of your father who hates me. If he hates me he would hate the child also—I know he would. And so I cannot give him up even to you—I cannot, and I will not. You will have to kill me first, Rupert!"

And she stooped to the little white basket by the window, and, lifting up the sleeping babe, pressed it jealously to her bosom.

"Here he must remain!" she said.

XXIII

NULLITY OF MARRIAGE

THAT was the first interview which served to shake the foundations of my darling's reason—thank God, only for a time. The other I shall relate more briefly. For it is as useless as it is painful, to dwell on these attempts of a wicked and a weak man to sacrifice the innocent over the graves of their own illdoing.

That which Rupert the son had been unable to effect by persuasion, Gregory the father came some time after to carry out by sterner means. It was that day in late November to which, and to the night that followed it, so many references have been made in other parts of this history.

A grey warmish day for the season it was, with a spring feeling in the air, brief stray glints of sunshine struggling through the clouds, and the leaves of the few trees on the island wavering noiselessly down as if the very trees were sick and shivering of their own proper intent. When I saw Mr. Glendonwyn disembark with Mr. Surgeon Warner, I knew that the battle so long imminent, must now be fought to a finish.

And I do not think that I was very sorry. These Glendonwyns, with their pitiful shifts, their pride, all in the wrong place, their willingness to sacrifice everything for their great name—the woman who loved them, the woman who had aided them, the babe that had been born to them, stirred every bit of combativeness in me. Of course I except John, who, though he

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bore the name, was as different from the others as God's gospel is from the devil's lie.

But our assailants did not appear to be in any haste to begin operations. Indeed I grew to wonder whether there was to be any direct attack that day or no, and to dread our adversaries' proffered gifts more than their openest enmity.

I could see, however, that their presence threw Kate into wild distress. She had recovered quickly since her husband's visit, and could now walk about all over the island with the help of an arm or an occasional rest by the way. She had been a strong girl all her life, and at this time doubtless drew largely upon a twenty years' stock of the most perfect health.

But she refused to let little Rupert, as (against my wish) she persisted in calling the child, out of her sight. I could see her shifting the very cradle farther away, wedging it in between her rocking chair and the wall, that the babe might not underlie the malign glances of its grandfather Gregory or the yet more baneful triangular eyes of Mr. Surgeon Warner.

She trembled as the latter came near to admire, and she instantly turned the little face again into her bosom.

It was already afternoon before Mr. Glendonwyn opened his batteries. Kate was sitting in the window seat with the child in her arms, silent mostly, but sometimes murmuring sweet-sounding commonplaces in a melting voice, wrestling with a clenched little red fist belonging to Master Rupert the Second in her mouth, or lifting the babe in her arms that she might tell him for the hundredth time how surpassingly lovely he was.

As for me I sat quietly sewing by the fire in the parlour, waiting for the first gun of the engagement.

Mr. Glendonwyn had seated himself at the table with a large pocketbook full of papers, which he pres-

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ently spread out before him and proceeded to study intently. Warner had brought a book from the library, which he was pretending to read. But through all I could feel his bayonet eyes upon me, with a cast in them every whit as pronounced as the crossed nib of a schoolroom pen.

"Now for it," I thought, "how I wish John were here to help me!"

Quite abruptly Mr. Glendonwyn turned from his paper-sorting to Kate, who started violently as he addressed her.

"Madam," he said, "I have been made aware that upon a certain date of January of this present year my son Rupert foolishly and without my knowledge went through a form of marriage with you. Into the legality or illegality of that ceremony I shall not enter. It is sufficient that the fact cannot now be proved in any court of law——"

"But the witnesses—the minister—?" I cried, indignantly. "Why, I myself was present!"

"The first is dead," said Mr. Glendonwyn gravely,—"the second (here he turned towards the surgeon, who bowed silently) will not, I think, be able to give such evidence as would tend to establish the validity of your sister's claim. There remains yourself, Miss Fairlie—and, I believe, a certain certificate of the form of marriage gone through between my son and your sister written in the hand of the barracks chaplain who officiated or pretended to officiate, on that occasion."

"I will certainly not keep silent for a day," I cried. "My sister was as truly married as any woman could be—as your own mother, Mr. Glendonwyn!"

Mr. Glendonwyn made a little impatient movement with his hand.

"I think," he went on, "if you will do me the favour to give me your complete attention, that I can show

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you some good reasons why you should either deliver that certificate into my hands or burn it before my eyes; and secondly, why your sister and yourself should sign a paper which I have before me, renouncing all claims on her own account or on that of her child to any properties which might accrue to them from such a marriage, supposing that its legality were unquestioned."

"I shall be glad to hear your reasons," I said, "they must be grave indeed to justify us in taking such a step."

"They are of the very gravest or I should not be here to-day in the attitude of a suppliant," said he with a kind of angry humility. "Briefly, then, they are three. First, if our requests are not complied with and my son declared free to marry, Rupert will go to prison as a forger, I as an embezzler. Again, I have legal opinion that in the absence of witnesses in your favour the quasi certificate, a purely informal document, is quite valueless; and thirdly, which perhaps may influence you most, if our demands are not complied with, Dr. Warner and I intend to take with us, by force if necessary, the child which has been the issue of my son's unfortunate misalliance."

He had hardly the words out of his mouth when Kate was on her feet, breathing deeply and fiercely, her head thrown a little forward, and the masses of her splendid hair falling in disorder about her neck. With a single motion of her hands she pushed back the chair and stood with clasped fingers and flashing eyes between the men and the babe.

"You shall not—you cannot take my child," she cried. "You are only doing this to frighten me, I know. I will call for help. I will strike you dead with my hands. Fairlie—Hamish—Jonet—help me! They are going to take him away—to take my little child from me. Oh no—no—no!"

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I had risen and gone across to her, but with one hand she put me easily aside. She was wonderfully strong. She held out the other to Mr. Glendonwyn with a paper in it.

"There," she cried, "take it! Read it! Burn it! I desire never to see it again! Or him either! He has sent you to take my boy away from me. I shall never trouble him more! See, I will burn it myself before your eyes."

And before any one could stop her, she had thrown the paper into the fire and stamped it down with her heel. It flamed up momentarily in the bright blaze of the pine branches, and as it crumbled into black ash I could see an entirely new expression come into Gregory Glendonwyn's eyes. When next he spoke it was with quite a new tone of authority.

"So far, good," he said, "and now, Madam, I must have your signatures to this document also. After that, I will leave you in peace. It goes to his heart to be compelled to appear hard with you, but all our safeties require it."

And he pushed across to me a paper which set forth "that in consideration of an annual payment of three hundred pounds sterling, Kate or Catherine Glendinning, daughter of David Glendinning of Boatcroft in the parish of Gower, was to bind herself to renounce all claims and rights ensuing from any irregular or apparent marriage between herself and Rupert Glendonwyn, younger of Castle Gower, and to declare that she was not legally married to the aforesaid Rupert."

All in a moment the possibility of meeting stratagem with stratagem flashed upon me. I knew, of course, that the paper Kate had burned was not the original certificate which the minister had written, and which Warner and I had witnessed. I had the best possible reasons for my knowledge. In fact I had carefully copied it out upon paper of a similar quality, imitating

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the signatures as best I could. I had done this as soon as Kate and I came back from our first carriage jaunt together—in the days when Mr. Rupert was at our house all the time, and—when I had already begun to love him as much as I did afterwards. I had then put the original with all my parchments and certificates in a sealed envelope in the little safe wherein my father kept his moneys, his papers, his plans, and his drawings. I marked the outside clearly, "Fairlie's certificates—School!" And I knew that it would rest there till the day of doom safe and intact.

For this reason alone I had permitted Kate to carry the copy about with her—which otherwise would have been a foolish and fatal thing to do, in days when Mr. Rupert's word was her law, and when, if he had asked it of her, she would have given the very head off her shoulders to do him pleasure.

Even then I saw further into the young man than any in our house—aye, even his own brother. So I put the paper by in case of need, where neither Kate's fingers or his could get at it.

So, with this knowledge and believing also that a marriage is a marriage, and no paper renouncing it is of any legal value though signed by either or both parties, I whispered to Kate that, for the sake of peace, it would be as well that she should sign the document.

"And if I do, no one will take away my child?" she cried. For that was ever uppermost in her mind.

After I had given her this advice Gregory Glendonwyn surveyed me all over with his deep-piercing grey eye, as if to make out what my meaning was and how much I knew. But I continued to sew tranquilly, and bore his inspection to all appearance stolidly enough.

I think that for some unknown reason Mr. Rupert must have impressed him with false ideas of my clev-

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erness, and that he was inclined to be suspicious of his too easy victory.

Kate accordingly signed the paper without even troubling to read it. For, since baby chanced to require special attention at the moment, what were papers to her whose very life was at the service of those whom she loved—that is of the Ruperts Glendonwyn elder and younger? And I believe, in a lesser degree, also of me, her sister. As before, Surgeon Warner and I formally witnessed the transaction, which, I admit, caused me no little secret satisfaction, remembering two similar signatures adhibited to another document locked up in the little safe along with drawings of farm buildings and plans of greenhouses. For even if Kate could sign away her own rights—what about those of this clamorous young gentleman whom his mother was just now enveloping (with the help of numerous safety pins,) till he looked like a cocoon through which a little rubicund-faced silk-worm has just begun to eat its way.

“Now,” said Gregory Glendonwyn, pushing a thick envelope over to Kate, “be good enough to sign a receipt for that. There is a form enclosed. You will not, however, need to use the money till such time as you are landed at some Cumberland port or wherever we decide that it will be best for you to settle.”

Kate looked helplessly over at me for instructions. So I counted the notes, which were upon the Bank of England, and amounted to £150, glanced at the form of receipt, and showed my sister where to write her name.

“Write ‘Kate Glendinning!’” said Gregory, who was watching us closely. I think the whole matter affected him as being somewhat too easy. He would rather have had either of us make a fight for it—I could see that clearly enough.

“Yes, write your maiden name, dear!” I whispered.

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For I remembered John once telling me that down to a very recent date it was the custom in Scotland for married women to sign their maiden names, even to legal documents. So no harm could come of that.

This being done, Gregory Glendonwyn and Surgeon Warner gathered their papers and went out together without any leave-taking, either to hold a consultation, or to give Hamish his orders as to our imprisonment till such times as we were enlarged, according to agreement, at the Cumbrian or Lancastrian seaport where we were to reside.

It was with a smile that I thought how, though at present we could not get out of the island (and indeed till now, we had had no desire to do so)—since it was clear that the two elder Glendonwyns, father and son, wanted nothing better than to be rid of Kate and myself on the easiest terms to themselves—it would be a very faraway port indeed which would prevent me from communicating with my father and John.

Nor did I feel the least remorse for the part I had played. Our enemies were trying to hoodwink and outwit us. I held it no sin, therefore, to overlook their cards as much as I could.

XXIV

THE TOWER CHAMBER

NO sooner had the Laird of Castle Gower and his satellite betaken themselves out of doors, than Kate sprang to her feet with swift tigerish energy.

"Come, sister," she said, in a low hushed whisper, "quick—let us get away. They have determined to take baby from me. I saw it in their eyes all the time. Why else did Rupert's father bring the doctor to help him? They want to steal my boy away! Perhaps to kill him—at least to put him away, where I shall never see him again."

Whereupon she proceeded to roll up her work and make a bundle of several things which the baby might require, as if she would have quitted the house immediately.

I had therefore to get her away into her own room, where I impressed upon her how impossible it would be for us to leave the island in broad daylight, with three men all on the lookout, carrying a baby, and all the available boats locked in the boathouse.

Kate listened without speaking. She seemed to be taking in what I said, but I perceived a strange lacklustre deadness in her eyes. I might have known that she was drifting back into her old abstraction, though this time with new motives and desires. It was to Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn she was turning once more.

"I must go to him," I heard her whisper more than once, "he will surely protect his own. It is his father

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who has set him on to do this. I am sure of that. He is good—he is kind—he loves me! Has he not proved it a thousand times? He and I will go away together—and baby. Yes, and baby along with us. Very far away, where they will not be able to find us any more—will they, baby dear?”

I did not hear all this at one time, but rather in snatches, as I went to and fro, contriving work to keep me near my sister. And as often as I approached her, she would smile such a pitiful contriving smile and say in a constrained voice, “Do you think they will have gone yet?” Or perhaps, “Had we not better go to the pier and see them off—will they not expect it?”

But all her excitement of the afternoon paled before what was to come, when about four o'clock in the afternoon Hamish entered by the great old door of the tower in evident haste. He went into the back parts to seek Jonet, and there unseen and of course unheard by us, conversed in signs with his dumb wife. It was not long before the two of them came up to our room—the little bedroom with the window upon the sea which I had chosen for myself when first we came. Then Hamish without any preliminary informed us that “Ta gentlemen would not be crossin' in the boat that nicht, but would be stoppin' ower till the mornin'.”

Accordingly he desired Kate and myself to change into the pair of communicating rooms which gave upon the inner court-yard, while, as he said “him and Jonet would ‘mak’ up shake-doons for ta gentlemen” in my little chamber.

It seemed a thing natural enough, for it was late, the wind was rising, and there was every prospect of a storm. Why should Mr. Glendonwyn and his friend spend a night in the saddle or trust to the dubious hospitality of the hut on the mainland (though indeed we

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knew not then of the proximity of the Corse of Slakes) when there were good beds and homely comfort to be had in Mr. Glendonwyn's house on his own Isle of Inch Jonet?

But who was to convince our poor frightened Kate of that? She fairly leaped up at the word.

"No—no," she cried fiercely, "I will not leave this room. I will not go into the other chambers. I will not be parted from my boy. Let them have all the front rooms if they like. We will stay here together. See, there is a lock upon the door. Fairlie, you and I will lock ourselves in. I cannot sleep. I shall sit up all night. They want to take my darling from me. But they shall not—no, they shall not!"

I had to quiet her as best I could, at the same time explaining to Hamish that the gentlemen could have the other two rooms,—but that Kate and I would remain where we were.

"As ye like, mem," said Hamish, "there's nae objections that I ken o', why ye shouldna sleep in the meat-safe gin ye want to. Deil bite me, but there's nae end to weeman's vagaries! Gin ye had sax score o' blackfaced sheep to attend to, ye wad hae fewer whigmaleeries in your heids, I'm thinkin'!"

Hamish went out, and the moment he was gone Kate threw herself almost tigerishly upon the door, locked and barred it, and began to drag a heavy chest-of-drawers into place across the panels.

I assured her that there was no danger and succeeded for the time, in persuading her to restore the chest-of-drawers to its place. But I could see that so far as her suspicions were concerned, the mischief was done. Nay, I learned afterwards from words Kate let fall, that from that moment she began to suspect even me—a delusion which, working in her poor brain, bred the strange hallucination that sent our dear lass upon so long and strange a pilgrimage,

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when she had scarce recovered from her own peril and sickness.

However, for the time being, I seemed to convince her, and to have made good my point. She even took little Rupert in her arms and went with me down to the sitting-room, where a bright fire was blazing. We had the room to ourselves till suppertime, when Mr. Glendonwyn came in and with the greatest politeness proposed that we should all sup together.

As soon as she heard his foot come towards the door, I could see Kate clutch her child so tightly that the youthful Rupert promptly objected and sent forth far and wide his lusty protestation. But when Mr. Glendonwyn came in, Kate met him smiling. There was indeed (as I remember now) a strange fixity in her smile, and she said but little. Indeed I do not remember much of what passed at table, save that there was a great deal of talk between the two men. Surgeon Warner had been doctor on a whaling ship, sailing from the port of Dundee to the Greenland coast and he had much to tell of perilous fiords with glaciers that caved from unseen clefts, raising mountainous waves in dangerous narrows, of nips and icebergs, floe-ice and walruses, and the hunting of the white tiger upon the Greenland ice-fields.

I heard the words come and go meaningless as the far away tinkling of bells. I noted the expression of interest or indifference on the face of the Laird of Castle Gower. But somehow before the meal was over a curious warm dusk of drowsiness stole over me—I knew not whence or why. I had only time to warn Kate that I must go at once to our room. I dared not even wait for her to gather the various properties, infantile and invalid, which she had brought with her. I could only seize the baby, bid the men “good-night” in some fashion and stumble upstairs. But ere I closed the door, I seemed to

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see an expression of intelligence pass from one to the other of our guests in the house of Inch Jonet. As to this, however, to this day I own myself uncertain.

I remember locking the door. . . . Then after an interval which seemed interminable there came a knocking, again and again repeated. Kate went trembling and after some parley opened the door. It was Hamish who stood without with a folded paper, which Kate took into her hands. Then she locked, as it seemed to my dizzy brain, very many doors, and brought me the little sheet of white with a puzzled expression upon her brow.

"Tell me what it means!" she said, as if she herself were not able to understand.

I was lying on the bed, as I had flung myself down without undressing. I took the paper out of her hand. I saw the writing—Mr. Gregory Glendonwyn's beautiful round hand (like the autographs of Burns in the large editions of his poems). But curiously enough, though the individual words and letters stood out like type, the meaning of the whole wavered to and fro before me, dim as a moon shadow on the wall. Mine eyes saw the words indeed, but between them and my brain there swept that blurring hurrying mist. I knew no more.

* * * * *

Again after a space I came to myself, as out of the clang and hammerstoke of some great foundry, where for infinite years I had been confined, while about my pillow the unresting workmen day and night kept up their multitudinous din.

Or in other words so it seemed to me when I awoke. Someone was knocking on the door. That was the more simple explanation. But I could see nothing save the dim square of the window, and outside I could hear only the subdued pervading hush, the familiar

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calling sound of the sea, falling regularly and naturally as human breathing on the shore.

"Open—open!"

I could discern a confused clamour of voices outside the door. I felt to make sure that I was completely dressed. I was quickly assured. Discomfort and itching ill-humour were in the very clinging of my clothes. There was also a curious chill in the apartment. I rose and made my way as best I could to the door. I did not, however, succeed in reaching it, for most persistently I kept bumping against the angles of the furniture.

"Open, or we will break down the door!"

The voice was that of Mr. Gregory Glendonwyn.

This was too much for me. So I bade them break down fifty doors. Then instantly recollecting that Kate and the child might be frightened, I asked them to stay a moment. Mr. Glendonwyn had given us a few boxes of lucifer matches with bottoms of roughened glass, which were then thought a curious and wonderful invention.

By orienting the position of the window I managed to scramble back to the bedside, and presently struck a match which burned with a blue flame, together with much odour of an evil sort. I looked about. Kate's bed had not been slept in.

Both she and the babe had vanished.

I hardly know how I managed to remove the heavy chest-of-drawers which kept the door closed. My head was still both dizzy and drowsy with my sleeping draught, and the room reeled about me when I strove to push the obstruction aside. At last I could unbolt the door and turn the key.

Mr. Glendonwyn came in hastily without any greeting. He had a tin lantern in his hand, of the common stable pattern then in use. He turned it about the room twirling black shadows like the spokes of a wheel.

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"Where is your sister?" he demanded with an oath, unusual upon his lips. "Warner, I believe after all, the jade has given us the slip."

I could only tell him that I had been sound asleep and knew nothing of the matter. It was beyond my power to help, adding that Surgeon Warner could probably explain to him why I had been asleep.

But he did not answer me. I think now that he never even took my meaning. For at that moment Mr. Glendonwyn espied the little door which led out upon the platform of the tower. It was open, and I understood in a moment why it was that the room had felt so damp and cold when I awoke. Kate had escaped that way, driven on by her fears for the safety of her child.

She had escaped. But how—hampered with a baby as she was, and but recently recovered herself from the deadly weakness of child-bed.

I went out on the tower-top, following Mr. Glendonwyn. As we stood on the little platform, the Laird swung his lantern this way and that.

A cart-wheel of shadow, still greater and blacker, rayed about us. The wind blew keen and chill over the water. Beneath, the wall was sheer. No foothold or swinging rope told a tale of possible exit. Yet my sister was gone, leaving the bed unpressed, the door bolted and barred. Only her cloak of dark blue and some few of the babe's wrappings had been taken.

I caught up my own cloak and followed the men out. Mr. Glendonwyn took his way straight down to the pier. As we passed the door of the boathouse, I saw that it was open. There was a light ahead of us as we stumbled on, my heart beating wildly with the fear of I knew not what. We reached the little sheltered bay where the landing-stage was. There was old Hamish McColl, busy with a boat I had never seen before. That in which Mr. Glendonwyn and the sur-

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geon had crossed was gone. The rope by which it had been tied had been cut with a knife and the released strands flapped a little in the wind as it drooped from the post.

So much was certain, Kate and her babe were out there on that waste of waters. They had fled as soon as I was asleep, the blank darkness of a November night instantly swallowing them up.

"Get in and help us to find her," said Mr. Glendonwyn, roughly, "it will ruin all if she appears with her child at Castle Gower!—Or even" (he muttered the final words in a lower tone, as if to himself) "if she should meet Rupert!"

XXV

BABE RUPERT

THE voice of Kate Glendinning speaking—soft, monotonous, low-toned, in the hushed silence of a little room—the fire in the grate the only light—the winter grey of the noontide carefully tempered by drawn curtains—I, Fairlie alone by the bedside. There you have the scene. But a little farther off, hidden behind the hanging stood another, even our father, David Glendinning. He too was listening unseen, his head sunk in his palms.

For, thank God, there was no need to hide anything from him any more. Enough there was to be hidden—enough that we all meant to hide from prying eyes, and die hiding, if God gave us grace. And then—to face the world, as only a Scottish family in such straits can. But at any rate I stood no more alone. My father was with me now. Ah, if only I had taken him into my confidence from the first! And indeed so I would, if the secret had been mine only. Nor would I have left him to go away with nine Johns—that is, without telling him first.

But Kate's voice (as I can hear it now) was relating a strange, simple tale—ininitely touching, at least to us who had been part of that history and who now held the wanderer to our hearts against a world of slanders.

“You must forgive me, Fairlie dear, (she was saying). It was wicked and cruel of me. But then I did not know what I was doing. I thought (how foolish

of me!) that you were in league with those who wanted to take my baby from me. So I said nothing to you of what I meant to do. I was afraid you would tell them. I wanted to get to Rupert—it seemed as if I must get to Rupert, and I knew you hated him. Oh yes, you did! I always knew that—though indeed he always spoke nicely about you. I think at heart he was a good man, my Rupert—that is, if his father would only have left him to me. He never meant us any harm. I know that. God will never be so cruel to me as to let me believe that he did.

“So when you were busy in the house I stole out—it was after these two had come back. I heard them go into the dining-room where the guns are, and I slipped past so quietly, and went round to the back of the peatstack. That is where Hamish keeps his tall ladder. I saw him put it there the day you and Jonet helped him with the hay-stacking last August. I remembered it, often saying to the ladder, ‘Lie you there and wait—I may need you some day!’

“Yes, dear, it *was* bad of me—wicked. Because all the time I was doing it, I knew you loved me. It was just a Something that kept saying in my head—over and over again, wearisome as the ticking of a clock, sometimes when you get to listening for it, ‘Don’t—trust—Fairlie! Don’t—trust—Fairlie!’

“Well, at any rate I found the ladder. At first I thought I could never be able to carry it and set it against the wall. But just when I was going to give up, I heard baby cry. And then all at once I could.

“I got it up bit by bit, a little at a time. And once I had a terrible fright and was obliged to sit down for a while behind the peatstack. A window opened in the kitchen wall and someone looked out. But it was only old Jonet who threw down her dish-washing

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water and then shut the window to again without seeing the ladder.

"Then I slipped back. And oh, Fairlie—I felt so happy to see the babe again, and to think that there was a way out of it all for him and me. It was hard to wait. I knew that their boat would only be tied with cord. Because the day after Rupert went away I unwound the chain and threw it over the cliff into the sea, before Hamish came back from rowing him. He was looking for it more than a day. I laughed within me. For I thought 'When they come again, I will perhaps get a chance to cut the rope and get a boat in spite of them.' And I always meant to tell you of it, Fairlie. But the devil or else the little ticking Thing in my head kept saying that I must not. You would not let me go if I did.

"Yes, it was very wicked! But do not be angry. I always knew better—that is, when the Thing-in-There did not go *tick-tick*. And I loved you all the time. But I must tell you. Oh, yes it was so simple to do. Only before I begin I have a real wicked thing to tell you. I wanted you to sleep and sleep sound. Because I thought baby might cry and wake you when we were just going. And you know, you wake if a pin drops, Fairlie. I think it is with getting up so early in the mornings. I never wake up for anything except the thought that baby may be wanting me, and I waken often twenty times in the night thinking that. Well, the old hateful Thing kept saying all the time, 'Give—Fairlie—some—of—that—sleeping—stuff—you—got—for—toothache.' And I dropped thirty drops in your wineglass before supper—only there were more than that. For the last came in a little sticky run, you know how it sometimes does! But you said that the water had a nasty taste and left some of it that you didn't drink. Oh, I can't think what made me so wicked, Fairlie. And so clever at wickedness! I never was

that before. But that night everything that I wanted to do, and just how to do it, popped up in my head without my needing even to think of it at all. It was the funniest thing.

"No, I am not the least tired, dear,—at least not if you will put little Rupert upon the bed and let him suck my fore-finger. I would rather tell you all about it now. Is father there? Why do you love me so much, father dear?—I have been such a bad daughter to you. I shouldn't if I were you!

"Oh yes, about the boat—no, I was at the part about your going to sleep. It was funny to watch—I mean it would have been if it had not been so wicked—to see you trying to keep awake. I did not know we were to go downstairs to supper, you see, or I would not have given it you till after. Mr. Glendonwyn came to our room and asked us, you remember. And all through supper I saw that you were just dropping with sleep.

"Then, when at last you went quickly upstairs, I had to help you to bed, and I just opened your dress at the neck and covered you up comfortably. Then I laughed—yes, I did. I did not feel it wicked at all at the time—only after it was over, I was sorry and tried to wake you. But you had always been making me do things, and planning and carrying out, and having everything you wanted come just so. And now here was I wiser than all of you. And oh, so strong! But I waited a long, long while, till I heard them come up and listen at the door. Then I was dreadfully afraid they meant to come in, and that I should not be able to wake you to help me. And oh, I was so frightened. So it was after that, that I dragged the chest-of-drawers in front of the door—after they were gone, I mean. For when they were there I just walked about the floor, hushing baby and talking to him to show them that I was awake. Oh, I was so cunning and so proud

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of myself for being able to cheat so many clever people—four of you besides poor dumb Jonet, who was after all the only one who came near to finding me out.

“Then I heard Mr. Glendonwyn and Surgeon Warner go down again and shut themselves into the gun-room. And I took baby in my arms. Oh, how I prayed that he would not cry. Once I even thought of giving him a few drops of the laudanum—but oh, I am so glad that I did not. For they say it might have killed him. But at any rate I did not. I opened the window, and put out my hand, trembling for fear the ladder would not be high enough, or lest some one should have taken it away.

“But it was there—only so steep and thin, and running so far down into the darkness that I knew not how I was going to trust baby upon it. However, I took a long breath and let myself out backwards, creeping very quiet and slow lest any one should hear me. And my arm grew so tired with baby's weight and having to hold on with the other that I trembled all over. And the strange thing is that the ladder was firm and strong all the time baby and I were on it. But as soon as we got to the foot, it slipped sideways to the ground. I think God Himself must have been holding it to save baby.

“But the noise!—I expected to see them all rushing out and catching hold of me before I had time to get ten yards away. But it was just the same with everything that night. I was going to find my husband, —to tell him about our love and how he must help me to take care of our loveliest. And till I found him—everything went well—*ah, until I found him.*

“Yes, I will finish the story—though indeed I cannot understand why you do not let Rupert come and see me and the boy, if (as you say) he really loves us. But perhaps he is ill again? Perhaps—

“Ah, well, I won't talk about Rupert any more.

if you say I must not. There, kiss me! I will keep my promise and tell you everything. Well, I found the boat easily enough, simply walking straight to it. It was tied with a cord—a strong cord, but not too thick to be cut with my little pen-knife—you remember, the one I made Rupert take a half-penny for, lest it should cut our love if he gave it to me as a present. It was all done in a moment. Indeed as near as might be, I lost the boat itself. I had to make a jump for it. The tide was coming in quickly, and the boat was dancing on the little jabbling waves.

"But I scrambled in somehow—no, I never hurt myself a bit. Everything was as easy as if God had sent his angels to bear me and my baby up in their arms.

"Who is that crying?—I am sure I heard some one sob. It can't be Rupert, because you say he is not yet well enough to come. But that he loves me, I know. Indeed, do you know, I am sometimes afraid that he loves me more than I love him. For of course he can't love baby as much as I do. And I have two to love now—two Ruperts, both mine!

"Well, then, there was a wind blowing out from the island towards the shore, and I could not leave baby to go and set the sail. I do not know how I should have managed, only I think they had expected to start again at once. For it was only let down and fastened—not stowed away at all. And though I could not pull it high, I did manage to get it a little above the edge of the boat so that it drew out to sea. And oh, how gladsome it was to hear the swish of the little waves as we began to slip away through the water! Of course I don't know anything about the stars—they are what sailors steer by, aren't they?

"All I wanted was just to get clear of the Island—Inch Jonet, you know as we used to call it when I was so happy—when baby himself was like a little ship

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coming to the port, that would bring me all Rupert's dear love back again and a thousandfold. Just to think there ever was a time when I had not baby!

"And it has too—for you say that he loves me now. I wish I could see him, dear Rupert, and hear him tell me so as he used to do—so long ago on the old stone seat on the porch. But I can wait now cheerfully till he can come. For I have my baby, and what do I want more?

"Well, as I got farther out, the sail drew better and the boat went more swiftly. I could see the little twinkling star, which was the light in the kitchen window on Inch Jonet, dancing and dipping. So I kept that straight at my back, and steered to leave it behind. And so the boat sped on, and the wind grew stronger, till I had to crouch down in the bottom of the boat with my cloak about me and baby lying sound asleep between my knees. He was so cozy and warm under my skirts and when I blessed God for giving him to me, I somehow knew that he would show me a way to get to his father.

"And I do not know how long it was—very, very long—and after much battering of winds, and the waves leaping up in a kind of foamy way about us, but not angry or clutching—only glad that (as I thought) they were helping us to escape.

"And then I came right into the midst of an awful sound. It had been slowly growing and growing—not a loud sound but low and booming and awful. It made the lump in my throat go quiver-quiver just like a leaf that the wind shakes.

"And all at once I knew it must be the waves breaking on the shore of the mainland. Now I knew not one direction from another, but just drove straight away from the island. Yet the wind had carried me almost as straight to the place we started from with

Mr. Glendonwyn as if I had sailed it by compass, and all the navigations and stars in the world could not have done more. There was the lonely house and there before me the little pier. The foam of the breakers ran white for miles on either side of me, but I turned and let the sail down with a run and a clatter. And there! I could hardly believe it, in a moment the boat was gliding smoothly into the tiny harbour.

"As I told you everything seemed to go right along with me that night. It was to see Rupert I was going and God, I knew would help me to find him. So I had no fear. However, it was a little difficult to get Babe Rupert out. For the boat had passed the pier and put its nose into a creek at the side. However, as the tide was on the turn, and the water beginning to run down, it soon brought me back till the side of the boat rubbed lightly against the landing-stage. I caught up baby and stepped ashore.

"After that, there is not much to tell. There were two beasts in the little stable-shed where we saw the carriage horses tossing their heads that morning at their feed of corn—the morning when we came first to Inch Jonet, I mean.

"And one of these two was spirited and stamped his feet. But the other stood and smelt baby and blew on him softly through his nostrils, so that it tickled him and made him laugh. And for that I loved him. I even thought I could trust him with baby and me on his back, so I loosed him and led him to the door, where I got first up on the corn-chest and so upon his back. Then I cowered down on his neck that I might not hurt my head against the arch as he went out. I told the horse to go very quietly, because he was carrying Rupert the Second home to his father. Also because I could not sit on very securely, as there was no saddle. I caught the bridle once or twice, but each time the

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horse did not seem to like it and began to jerk his head and go faster. However, as soon as I dropped it again on his neck, he stopped jerking and went quietly.

"At this I was glad, for I had grown deadly tired all of a sudden and indeed had enough to do to hold baby and sit straight on the horse's back. However, I remembered that he would be sure to go right back to Castle Gower because his stable was there. And indeed so he did—never stopping and yet never trotting hard all the night! And I, all the while praying to God to give me what was best for my baby—which of course was that I should find Rupert, his father.

"And all at once as the morning began to come up grey over the black hills I heard a far-away sound of galloping and I grew deadly afraid. For of course I thought that Mr. Glendonwyn and Dr. Warner had found out and were chasing me. So I called on my good beast to stand quite still, because that baby and I wanted to get off. And he stopped as good as gold, and I slipped down, alighting on a green bank at the top of a deep descent under trees at the foot of which a river ran over stones. But the horse, after standing a moment with his ears turned back listening, took fright at the sound of hoofs and with a flourish of his heels he scampered off down the road.

"And I ran as fast as I could down and down into the hollow of the wood, past a little house, and a white sign post like a tall ghost—one of those all about 'Trespassers' and right and wrong ways and 'fines,' with 'By order' in big letters at the bottom, with marks where boys going to school had stoned it. And then all in a moment it came to me where I was. The good horse had not carried me wrong. I was at the place called the Green Dook, at the end of the path by which Rupert used to slip through the policies to meet me at the old burying-ground. It had a white gate that turned in the middle, and Rupert often said that

though I was slim enough now, the day would come when he would be an old man doddering on a stick, and me a fat old lady who would stick in the middle trying to get through.

"And even then I stopped, to laugh—happy that I was so near Rupert. And I was thinking, too, how happy I ought to be to have such a lover and such a husband, when the noise of the galloping came suddenly louder and nearer. It seemed almost at the top of the Dook. And then a strange and terrible thing happened. I was just going to hide myself in the fir plantation where it is black as pitch, when I heard—oh, it cannot be that I really did hear it. It was some dream or distraction of the night—I often have had foolish thoughts lately, you know. But I seemed to hear my Rupert's voice crying out terrible words—words that it hurts me even to think about—and cursing his brother and you, Fairlie, and the day that ever he saw me!

"Then I knew for certain that the little *tick-tick* demon in my brain was at his tricks again. So I let my cloak drop and ran out at the gate to meet Rupert and cast myself on his bosom.

"I passed through the little turnstile and I stood there with our babe on my arm, looking out, and getting ready to give my husband—oh, such a glad surprise.

"It was dark, yet I seemed to see everything. They say mad people see in the night like cats, and I was mad that night, dear Fairlie—mad—mad, or I should never have seen or heard the terrible things I did.

"First, I seemed to see my Rupert come galloping furiously along on a black horse, looking over his shoulder at a pursuer who rode still faster and all the time called on him to stop. Then as he came opposite the turnstile gate I stepped out to him and held up baby in my arms. It all seemed quite natural. I was

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all in white and baby too, for I had dropped my cloak to look pretty for my husband. I liked that he should see us first like that. And so in the darkness of the night he saw us—my Rupert, or whatever fiend of hell was riding there in his shape—yes, I saw him and he saw me! *And after him there rode another!*

“And then—oh, what a cry went up, like that of a poor damned soul out of the Horrible Pit! And in a moment all was whirled out of my sight down to the bottom of the Green Dook, pursuer and pursued, as it seemed amid the galloping of many furious horses. Then terror and madness took me by the throat. I ran as fast as I could down the path till I was lost in the damp quietness of the woods; and could hear and see no more terrible things. After that I remember no more, except just wrapping the babe tighter and going on and on and always on, with my feet burning like fire, and my knees trembling beneath me, and the dust rising up in my eyes, till somehow I came to the place where Rupert and I had been so happy, beyond the cleft tree in the old burying-ground. But even there I could not rest very long. For the galloping of horses seemed always about me. I heard the ring of their shoe-iron on the hard road. I saw the sparks fly from the stones beneath their feet. And I went ever faster and faster till—oh, Fairlie, that is all! I am very tired. Let me try to sleep. No, do not take baby from me! Let him nestle on the pillow beside me. I think I shall know that he is there even in my sleep!”

XXVI

POSSESSED WITH A DEVIL

[Being the Second Manuscript written by John Glendonwyn.]

RUPERT nodded and smiled as if he had expected nothing else than that I, his brother, should intrude upon him at that lonely house and in the middle of a winter's night. He looked debonair and well pleased to see me. There was something of almost demoniac self-possession during these last days about my brother Rupert. I have often thought so since. And though this is a great age of disbelief and such things are habitually scouted, I grow more and more convinced that the old Scottish word "fey" and the old scriptural condition "possessed by a devil" were both exemplified by Rupert Glendonwyn at this time.

"Ah, reverend sir," he said, speaking wholly without anger or surprise—indeed lightly and carelessly, "what brings you so far from home on such a night?—And on the Sabbath day too? A poor lost soul like mine may wander seeking rest, and finding none even in which to play my flute, but our family holy man, combed, curled, trimmed, and adorned with all the graces of the spirit—to be found blackguarding it at midnight upon the Corse o' Slakes! Oh, for shame, Sir! This is indeed a matter which must be reported to the Presbytery. Dr. Cæsar, your reverend father-in-law, shall say his say upon this!"

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He unscrewed his flute and wiped it delicately. Then putting it together again he motioned me to a chair and pushed the bottle and glass towards me. I refused both with a gesture of the hand.

"Well, my Saul among the Prophets," he sneered, "if you will neither speak nor yet drink, you can at least listen. Methinks if, like Saul the son of Kish, you had been sent to seek a young ass belonging to your father, you would not have had far to go to find one!"

And putting the instrument to his lips he blew a soft and moving air, two or three times over, always the same notes, yet varying the time and execution in a marvellous manner.

"There now, Parson John," he cried, "what do you think of that? My pursuits, you must admit, are idyllic. What came you out for to see, O most valiant defender of oppressed damsels? What did your dull brain figure to itself? Perhaps——"

But I could bear no more.

"Rupert," I said, "there is enough of this—I have found you out. I know who helped you in your knavery—even our father, who till now has been to me as a god sitting on a throne. I cannot tell why he has done this. I cannot tell why the girls have lent themselves to it. But I am here in the name of their father and their family to demand of you where that carriage drove to on the night when they left their home, with Gregory Glendonwyn for their coachman and Surgeon Warner was left to bind up a leg that never was broken."

I had depended upon this to surprise and cover him with confusion, but again I was mistaken. He did not even deny the charge, as a weaker man would have done.

"Some mischance has helped you, dear Don Innocencio," he said, smiling. "You would never have

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found out even so much for yourself—no, not if you had stumbled over the carriage, horses, and coachman on your way to the kirk. But after all what are you the wiser? You have come a long road and tired your hack, with, I fear me, but little gain to yourself. What might your reverend detectiveship be going to do with yourself now?”

“That we shall see,” said I considerably nettled, “I may not be so clever as you, Rupert. But in the long run God is on the side of the innocent. Mark you that.”

“In the long run—yes, perhaps—” he said languidly, “but then you know the run is sometimes a confoundedly long one—a stern chase with a vengeance—more often a walk, indeed. But you tire me. Good-night, good slow-coach, I am obliged for your visit and all that. But now please close the door behind you, and tell old Bridget to send me in another mutchkin of her best, and plenty of hot water. A lemon is, I suppose, past praying for on the Corse of Slakes!”

He was again raising the flute to his lips, when I set myself down before him determinedly.

“I do not stir from your elbow,” I cried, “till I have found out what brings you here!”

He raised his eye-brows with an air of well-bred surprise, exceedingly insolent.

“No?” he said, with a mock gladness, very hard to bear, “You are indeed generous of your society. Well since I am to have the pleasure of your company if I do not tell you the truth I will e’en humour you. Why did I come here, says you? Because I wanted a rest. I came here to be out of the same parish with a blundering simpleton and an interfering fool. I came here to get out of the hearing of your cracked tin-kettle of a kirk-bell. I came hither to make your sanctimonious Sabbath a day of peace indeed,

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and to enjoy a tune upon my flute whenever it pleases me to do so, without that old hypocrite Grierson's ear glued to the key-hole every time I purse my lips to whistle."

And so saying and in the very act of lifting his flute to moisten the touch-hole, he gave me a look which said very plainly that he had shrewd suspicions as to the source of my information.

"What I am going to do now I *am* here," he said, "is far beyond your comprehension. But since even asses (they say) have an ear for music, perhaps a little tune may do you no ill. Which things are an allegory!"

Where he learned the knack of it I know not, and it were not from his own familiar spirit. For no one of the Glendonwyn's ever had an ear for music sufficient to enable them to follow a psalm tune in church without making all their neighbours turn round to look at them. Besides which there certainly was never heard anything in this countryside like the playing of my brother Rupert. The flute, which I had always looked upon as an instrument fit only for the long-haired fools who scribble poetry and daub canvas, became when inspired by his breath, like to the singing of blackbirds upon the morning tree-tops. I never heard the like.

And the matter of it (if one may speak of the matter of music) was as wonderful as the manner of setting it forth.

"Which things are an allegory," he had said. And so I found them.

First he played an air, simple and quaintly marked in rhythm, like the overword of a bairn's hymn. Then, striking into a higher bolder strain with birdlike turns and amorous allurements, he led up to such a tumultuous and soul-shaking back-and-forth of hurrying sound that scraps and snippets of melody seemed tumbled

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together headlong, as if some heavenly songsters had been caught fluttering in a net, whence they sent forth piteous appeals and wing-flappings—all gradually subsiding (perhaps as they were released one by one) into the burden of an ancient psalm, slow, sustained, and solemn as a burial march.

The musician stopped, unscrewed his instrument again, and turned upon me.

"There you have it—that is my parable,"—he said. "you are a professional interpreter of such. What do you take out of that?"

"You have come here," I answered him as quietly as I could, "on an errand the purport of which I can only imperfectly guess at. But this I do know, that I shall not let you out of my sight till I discover the mystery of the disappearance of these two poor innocent girls!"

"Innocent?" he cried, laughing, "how do you know they are innocent?"

"I would answer for it with my life!" I cried, starting as if an adder had hissed at me out of a bush.

He appeared to consider me philosophically, with a certain dispassionate air of doing justice to all the possible eccentricities of my mind and person. But I knew that he was only trying to irritate me, and that made me careful of my words.

Then sudden as an inspiration there came into my head a way to answer him.

"You of all men," I said, drawing a bow at a venture, "have the best reasons for knowing that they are innocent as children newly born!"

"No," he said, quite calmly, "my father has better!"

"Or had!" he added, looking at his watch while I was struck dumb by the marvel of his assurance.

"Now, Parson," he went on, with the same quiet insolence as before, (a year ago I should have smitten

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him in the teeth for it, but of late the Lord had begun to speak with me) "now, most holy churchman, I will tell you what I am going to do. You have obtruded your company upon me, it is true, but after all blood is thicker than water. So I will not turn you out. I am going to stay here another two hours—no more and no less. Then if you will accompany me, why, you are at liberty to do so—if you can. I fear me, however, that that padding hearse-hack of yours may find my Bravo's paces just a little too much for him. But never mind, your intentions are good, Parson Squaretoes! You remember that the Wise Man sayeth that wisdom is better than strength. I forget the chapter and verse—but you will find them in Cruden. Let that console you. Good-night my worthy John Knox!"

So saying my brother deftly pushed a chair under the calves of his legs so that the little silver spurs on his heels might not embarrass him, drew a lace-edged pocket-handkerchief over his face and appeared to go to sleep.

From the kitchen of the inn I heard the measured *rock-rock* of the old woman's nursing chair and her low moaning croon. I could distinguish too the horses in the stable outside moving about upon the beaten earth of their stalls, and once a pair of hoofs struck upon wood with such clanging force that I could feel the vibration even where I sat. After about an hour the old woman came in and looked keenly about. Then having lit another farthing dip she went as noiselessly out again.

I must have dosed from that point onward, for the next I remember was Rupert standing over me, tapping my shoulder with the key of the stable-door.

"You are but a poor spy," he said, "no decent detective force would employ you for a week. I hope you are better worth your salt as a spiritual watchdog

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of Zion's walls, or God Almighty will have a mighty poor bargain of you in the parish of Gower! For all you knew I might have been six long miles away by this time, uttering savage yells, with a Sabine maiden over each shoulder and a scalping knife stuck between my teeth. But I was kind to you, my good, stupid police-officer. Take a glass before we go—it will warm you and then we will try the mettle of your cart-horse along the road. There is eight miles between us and the ancestral towers of Gower. Come, I will give you a mile start and beat you at the gates for a hundred guineas!"

How long he had been awake and watching me asleep I could not tell. But it did not take much penetration to see how he had been employing his time. There was already one empty bottle upon the table, and as he spoke he poured out another full tumbler for himself, together with a glass for me—which of course I did not touch. Yet all that he had drunk seemed to have no effect upon him that night, save for the extraordinary lightness and vivacity it imparted to his motions and for the brilliancy of his eyes, which at times burned with a lambent glow as if the fires of hell were already alight behind them.

"It is no use waiting longer," he said, with mock gravity. "The friends whom I have been expecting have evidently played me false. Yet I have spent the evening agreeably enough with the 'Newgate Calendar,' and in the society of my dear and only brother. From both I have learned that 'the end of a matter is better than the beginning,' which again is the opinion of the Wise Man of the book of Ecclesiastes. With that dictum I also concur, being near as near my own as a man may be without actually dancing upon nothing. If the next world be as little worth living in as this, I shall be greatly mistaken. At any rate I am ready to make the venture. Only, if you please, let us

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take all the chances we can get. To-night I have read of twenty men—robbers and bloody murderers—and yet I take my oath every red-handed one of them died penitent—certain of their election and edifying the spectators. I should think Peter himself would get tired of so much belated repentance, and ask for a little consistency as a change. ‘You need not rattle your keys for me, old fisherman,’ I will say, when I come to his lodge-gate, ‘keep them at your belt. As I lived, I died, and now ask no better than to be treated according to the record!’ And I wager the pilot of the Galilean Lake will be so surprised, that ten to one he will let me in!”

Then was my soul stirred within me.

“Brother,” I said, “why should you blaspheme and make a dare of your Maker? You are a young man even as I am. God is merciful. If in the past you have done wrong, do justly now. Why have you come among us to work this change? My father was a man honourable above most, before you came back to alter him out of all knowledge. There was not a happier house in the country than that of David Glendinning. Think well what you have made of them!”

“If no more dishonour is ever brought on either, than I am responsible for,” he answered, defiantly, “both my father and David Glendinning will pass off the stage with less discredit than most men!”

“I would that I could believe you!” I cried, “I would give all I possessed to believe you.”

He shrugged his shoulders and helped himself again to the glass upon the table.

“I can only speak the truth,” he said, “I cannot make you believe it! Not that it matters in any case!”

He picked up a pair of gloves which lay on the table, and drew them on his fingers, smoothing them with the diligent particularity of a woman.

“Now,” he continued, mockingly, “we will open the

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stable and put our beasts to the proof. Bravo should be in fine fettle for the road after his rest. '*Deuch-an-dorris*' to you and likewise, if the expression be correct, '*Shlainte* '!"

And once more he drained his glass to the bottom.

In ten minutes we were on the road, Rupert growing wild with excitement as the night air in strife with the alcohol he had drunk, took effect upon his brain.

"Once let me upon Bravo's back," he cried, "and I will show you how a gentleman should go home to bed. John, you prig—you always were a prig and hated a bottle even when your nurse filled one with milk—ride for your life, I tell you—yours against mine! You can ride, for I taught you, and thrashed you when you fell off! Ride then, and keep within five hundred yards of me if you can! I will beat you at the gates!—which gates, do you ask, you cur? Some gates—any gates, the Castle gates—*Hell gates, if you like.*"

And then began a scene which even now I shudder to recall—a wild chase through the parish of which I had been ordained minister but a few months before. For I was determined now that on no account or consideration would I let Rupert out of my sight that night. I could see well enough, for all his floutings, that he was angry and bitter, because somehow I had come between him and his desire. He was moreover resolved that I should learn nothing—I, on the other hand, as firm and fixed that he should do nothing and see no one save in my presence.

I think that somehow in the stable my decent, staid old Peden the Prophet must have imbibed some part of the wilder spirit of Bravo, for never had I known that such speed and staying power were lodged in his venerable shanks.

Rupert went off with a shout of defiance and a fleeing toss of the hand.

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"Now for the blue eyes of Fairlie Glendinning!" he cried. And though I said not a word in reply, I took the words as a cartel of defiance and accepted the gage.

I would stick to him, I muttered grimly, or Peden and I should break our necks—that was all.

XXVII

THE GREEN DOOK

SO there ensued a great and notable race along that noble highway, which to this day stretches from the Ferry of the Slakes to the gates of Castle Gower. At first the road was happily mostly level and we flew along like the wind—Rupert's fiery black stretching himself out like a greyhound coursing. He was a noble beast and though spirited, exceedingly docile. But that night the demon was abroad, and Bravo instead of settling down to his work threw his head high and capered like a still unbitted yearling off the spring pastures.

Nor did the behaviour of my brother mend matters. He stood up in his stirrups shouting taunts at me over his shoulder. The coarser mood of the first night at Drumfern seemed to have returned upon him. The quiet irony of the change-house at the Corse of Slakes had passed and he grew loud and boisterous.

My brother spoke truth. I rode not ill. It is no source of pride to me this day, whose thoughts are bent on things so very much other—but the accomplishment (such as it was) certainly stood me in good stead that night. I shall never forget the rushing past of the landscape on either side—the hedges and dykes poured behind as if in some dream of flying. I had the feeling, too, that I was riding against a vehement tree-bowing tempest, though I have since been told that the wind was still and that sounds such as that of our tumultuous passage could be heard at a great distance.

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Rupert set the spurs freely to the sides of Bravo, so that the blood ran along the rowel to his very boot. Peden on the other hand was never touched. I carried neither whip nor spur, but only urged him gently with my unarmed heel and with the rein laid loose on his neck. And the poor brute seemed to understand what he was to do, and though he could never get within a hundred yards of Bravo and his wild rider, he still stuck grimly to his work, and not once did I lose sight of my brother.

Almost as soon as we had left the Change-house there leaped up in my mind one spot on the shoreward road towards Castle Gower that haunted me like the actual spectre of Fear. The military road had been carried partly over the line taken by another and an older road, made in the days when sharp turns and steep descents were less carefully avoided than they are by modern road engineers.

It was a spot called the Green Dook—that is to say, “dive”—a place on the remoter outskirts of my own father’s property where the road instead of being conveyed upon a bridge straight across the deep and narrow valley bends abruptly downwards into what is an apparent pool of rustling verdure in the summer, then, reaching the bottom, turning rapidly almost at right angles to itself the road crosses a bridge and ascends the opposite bank with a more gradual slope.

The Green Dook might never have existed but for a piece of obstinacy on my father’s part, who, having a little seldom-used lodge-gate a hundred yards or so on the south, had refused either to permit his avenue to be shortened or to pull down the lodge that the road might pass straight across. Moreover being of great authority on the board of the Commissioners of Supply for the county, he had carried his point in the face of engineers and surveyors and even the all-powerful Roads-and-Bridges Committee itself.

But a few steps from the bridge, and almost at the bottom of the Dook he had made a wicket-gate, and from thence a path led through the plantations and shrubberies to the Great House—a road which in past days was often chosen by Rupert and myself because in this way we could leave the grounds of Castle Gower practically without ever showing ourselves in the open.

The place, dangerous at the best of times, was simply a death trap in the darkness of a winter's night, and as we flew down the long, gradual slope half a mile from it, I called as loud as I could to Rupert, "For God's sake take care of the Green Dook!"

But he stood up, still going at full speed, and cursed me by name for an interfering craven dog, telling me to pull up myself if my gallows'-cart garron could go no farther.

Faster and faster we went, and for the first time that night I encouraged Peden with my voice. The brave old horse (for such he was though I gave but fifteen pounds for him on Kilgour Market Hill) responded so well that when we topped the rise in front of the Green Dook, I was within twenty yards of Rupert and gaining at every stride!

Now I do not know whether the heavier hoofs of Peden the Prophet thundering in his wake aroused Bravo to frenzy, or whether it was altogether the event which happened immediately after that caused the catastrophe I am about to relate. But certain it is that the mischief was done, not at the bottom but in the middle descent of the Dook, just where the private path makes off through the woods towards the mansion house of Gower.

This at all events is what I saw, so far as one could see anything. For the Dook at that early hour is of course a mere pit of leaves, filled to the brim with the blackness of darkness, tremulous with the dry rustle of the late autumn foliage and the drone of the Gower

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Water coming up from deep underneath, as it brawls over the bed of rocks and shifting cobbles.

By this time I was wellnigh at Bravo's heels and beginning to congratulate myself that my brother would pass the peril in safety. When suddenly I saw before me, illuminated faintly but distinctly visible through some fantastic sky-light in the trees above, the figure of a woman clothed all in white and holding a white-swathed babe standing in the opening where was the little turnstile gate into the woodland path.

Rupert saw or seemed to see, the figure also. For with a wild scream that was almost a shriek he pulled his horse's head sharp round—as it were to avoid the sight, right into the wall of the bridge, and the next moment Bravo crashed breast-high into the stone and lime with a sickening sound and his rider was thrown over the parapet.

How I got Peden stopped, and how or where I dismounted I never knew. I know that I heard the sound of a woman's voice somewhere and it seemed to me to be calling Rupert's name—but indeed everything swirled away from me in such a nightmare of confusion that I could be sure of nothing. I remember, however, stumbling down the steep slope, holding on to the stems of chance-planted young trees, and cutting and bruising myself against stones till, before I was aware, I stepped knee-deep into the cool rush of the water at the bottom of the Dook.

That brought me to myself, though for a while I could see nothing. I could hear the clatter of a horse's hoofs on the hard road, growing fainter every moment. I could see through the silhouettes of the leaves, the tall and gloomy single arch of the bridge black against the sky.

I called on my brother by name. But the trees gave back only the word "Rupert!" The woman's voice I did not hear again, but once when I was returning, it

seemed as if I heard, very far off, the sound of a young child weeping.

I groped along the water-way, great boulders obstructing me at every step and the swirl and surge of the water almost taking me off my feet.

Yes—there he was! He was lying limp, half in and half out of the water. How he had fallen I could not see. But I feared the worst because the upper half of his body was not wet. Therefore he must have fallen upon the stones.

With infinite labour at last I got him to the side and used what means I knew of for his recovery, but for a long time without effect. I called for help, for I was sure that I had seen a figure stand in the turnstile arch at the end of the little woodland path, close under the leaves—as one might wait for a friend in jest, to lay a hand at unawares upon his shoulder.

Some one had most certainly waited for Rupert there—friend or foe—I knew not. Perhaps—I am a minister and the thought may be allowed to me, it was the Angel of Death himself who had waited to lay a hand all unannounced on Rupert's shoulder at the Green Dook of Gower that dim morning.

I laid him down and loosened his waistcoat. There was no wound, only a suspicious pliancy about the region of the ribs. I dashed water on his face and chafed his hands. I left him for a moment and ran up through the black stems and out upon the road, crying on any that might pass by. I even passed through the dark narrow portico of the wicket gate and peered along the narrow silent aisle. But I could see no one and an indescribable feeling of awe kept me from going farther.

I turned and ran towards the lodge, and was half way there before I remembered that my father had turned away the late tenant, his head woodforester, only the week before and that the house was therefore

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empty. So being able to do nothing better I had perforce to betake me back to my brother. I found that he had certainly moved during my absence. For one thing his hand, which had been by his side when I left him was now under his head, holding it as if to subdue an intolerable aching.

I spoke to him again and in the coming light of dawn I saw him open his eyes slowly and look at me.

"Do not move, Rupert," I said, "you have had an accident—been thrown from your horse at the Green Dook. Lie still! I will go for Warner when you are a little better, and I can get you better established."

"Where is Kate?" he whispered, perfectly clearly and audibly.

"Kate?" I cried in astonishment. "What Kate?"

"Kate—my wife—what other?" was the astounding reply. To me astounding at least, for I knew my brother—or thought I did.

"Kate—your *wife*?" I cried again thinking more I fear of the fact which his words revealed than of the presence or absence of the woman he asked for.

"Yes, Kate," he exclaimed testily, "call her, will you! She was here a moment ago. Do not contradict me. I saw her, I tell you. I am going to die. 'Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,' you know. I have something to say to her. Call her back!"

I murmured that he was mistaken, as indeed I was sure he must be. Though I certainly would have taken my oath I did see a white figure in the arch of the shrubby pathway. But I judged it best to temporise.

"She is not here, Rupert," I made answer. "Best let me go for Warner. I daresay I can catch either of the horses!"

"I do not want Warner—I have done with Warner," he said. "Would to God that I had never seen

him! I want Kate, I tell you—call her to me! My father cannot separate us now!”

And to satisfy him, I actually climbed up again, and called the girl's name this way and that. But, of course all in vain. Nothing responded save the sullen murmur of the water over its boulder-strewn bed far below, the dry scaly rustling of the dead leaves under foot, and of the dying ones still left clinging to the branches overhead.

I never knew what a creepy place a plain Scottish wood may be, till the night I spent there with my dying brother in the Green Dook. At such times the insensibility of Nature appears cruel—aye, even infernal. The pain of human creatures seems to touch the Higher Powers so little. I have heard men who had temporarily lost their belief say that the bitterest thing to them was that God too seemed insensate and deaf to the cry of the suffering children with whom He had peopled the earth. That He does hear and help, I do believe. For myself I have tasted of His goodness at eve and morn. But—I could not convince another of it.

Rupert, strange to relate, appeared a little more contented after I told him that most certainly Kate was not there.

“Lay me higher on your shoulder, John,” he said, in a strange, dreamy, far-away voice, “I think I have been mad. At any rate I have dreamed a long and wicked dream. I have been in a nightmare trance. Perhaps I am about to come out of it. John, I want you to forgive me. I know Kate will. I am not very anxious about that. But I want you to find her and do her justice. I married her, John—Warner the surgeon and her sister were the witnesses. We got the chaplain from the barracks to come over for the wedding. You will be the heir now. We have arranged

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that. It is for the best. But do not let her want anything. My father knew, and was trying to get from her the certificate and a renunciation of all claims on me. That was what I was waiting for to-night. But something must have detained him!"

He wandered off again, murmuring scraps of love talk and faint half-uttered tendernesses.

"There is no one like you!—Yes—yes,—of course—at the old place! I will meet you. We will send word to Fairlie."

It struck me that it would be well that I should know where the girls were and I asked him. But either my brother's faculties were not clear, or else a gleam of his old elfish spirit flashed up in his eyes.

"Ah, you would like to find that out, wouldn't you? Oh yes, I know! Little Fairlie Glendinning is all our joy. Well—I shall not tell you!"

"How then can I help Kate?" I said.

He came to himself at the words.

"Yes—yes"—he murmured, "of course I must tell him. My father will try to spirit them away again. I say, John, he will want you to marry Miss Carslaw, the heiress, now. She is five-and-thirty and has a red nose. All the heiresses I ever saw had. But, you know, between ourselves Warner and I have queered that game! Take care, John, that he does not queer yours too! Don't let go my pocket book though. You will find something in it which will keep Warner quiet, if he is inclined to make trouble—a pill more bitter than any *he* can make up!"

He laughed his low musical laugh.

"Put your hand into my other pocket. I believe I have broken my flute," he went on, calmly. "No, not on that side—the other! Not that it matters. I am not going where they play much upon harps anyway!"

I drew it out and gave it into his hand.

"No," he said, "it is all right. It is not broken—

only my ribs. Flute whole—bones gone! Praise be to whatever divinity presides over these things!—I will compose a hymn to that unknown god. Perhaps he may help me where I am going.”

I stood chill-stricken at the sheer blasphemy.

He set the flute to his lips, and said, touching the touch-hole with his lips in his old dainty manner, “I wish my father were here to listen. The humour of the situation would appeal to him. Besides I have one or two things to say to him. I might have been—well, no matter what I might have been, but for him. It is a pity he is not here. However, I will include him along with the unknown god!”

I daresay I ought to have stopped him. But with a dying man’s head on your breast, and afraid to move lest you should cause him to suffer the most exquisite pain, it is not easy to hit upon the absolutely right thing to do. I only did the best I could think of then. I have never been quickly resourceful all my life. So I did—just nothing at all.

Rupert set the flute to his lips, and out of that pit of darkness, with only the white ripple of the water as it purled against a stone or glanced sideways from the root of a tree to break the gloom, there arose the strangest and weirdest melody the ear of man hath ever listened to.

Wavering and uncertain at first, gaining strength gradually and fitfully, almost dying into silence and then again asserting itself, that thrilling music rose and fell through the night.

The woods stilled themselves as if consciously and seemed to grow more solitary. The clouds grew greyer above, yet sent down no beam to light the face of the musician, so thick was the foliage. I could feel his heart beat faster in unison then flag and fail as the music died into silence, as with one or two broken sobs. Again after a long pause Rupert set the flute to his

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mouth. The sound came stronger this time. It seemed at once a farewell to Life, a defiance of Death. Hatred, love, the bitter and the sweet of it, followed hard on each other, grew glorious and soul stirring, then confused, scornful, and bitter—till, out of the mere clangour of sound emerged again that solemn dirgelike psalm, but more slowly and majestically played than before.

He broke off suddenly.

"I wish I could do that at my own funeral," he said, "God—I could blow a lament better than any piper that ever fingered chanter. Flutes and recorders—flutes and recorders—these are your true instruments for the death music!"

* * * * *

"Who is there?"

The words came down abruptly from above as if the question had been flung at us from the dark ledge of the bridge. Possessed by the music, I had not heard a horseman ride up. Yet the voice was certainly my father's. In an instant Rupert was aflame with excitement.

"Take me to him! I must speak to him—I cannot die else!" he cried, and tried to rise. But the effort was too much and, sinking back with a terrible groan, he lay perfectly inert upon the bank of the Dook.

In the fewest words possible I told my father what had happened, and in another minute, as it seemed, he was standing before us. He appeared to have brought the day with him, for now we could see each other quite clearly.

He kneeled down and would have taken Rupert by the hand, but as his father approached I could feel the dying man shudder, quivering from head to foot with loathing and aversion.

"Did you get the papers?" he whispered hoarsely,

without looking at him. "You may speak before John. He knows all. Did my wife give up the papers?"

"She is not your wife any more," answered Gregory Glendonwyn, triumphantly. "I have seen the marriage lines burned, and here is the paper of renunciation of all claims signed by both the women."

And he put a paper into Rupert's hand.

The young man raised himself in my arms as if to read it. I could feel him nerve himself for some tremendous effort. He tore the written words small with quick eager fingers, as if he could not get the fragments small enough.

"You lie," he said to his father in a soft intonation like the hissing of a serpent. "She is my wife. I am a dying man and—you brought me to this of it. I would have been a happy man but for you—I might even have been a good one, as men go! You have broken two lives—it may be more than two! Good-bye, *father!*"

And with a supreme effort he raised himself and struck his father full in the face with his hand, breaking the flute which he still held there and scattering abroad the torn fragments of paper.

The next moment Rupert Glendonwyn fell back dead.

* * * * *

[The end of the Second Narrative written by John Glendonwyn.]

XXVIII

THE HEWING IN PIECES OF AGAG BEFORE THE LORD

[In which the Editor resumes his Narrative of Events from Original Papers and from unwritten Information supplied to him.]

THE last line of Fairlie Glendinning's report of her sister's escape from Inch Jonet tells also how it was that David Glendinning, lying tossing on a sleepless pillow early one mild faintly misty morning, heard outside the crying of a young child. And why, on going to the door he stumbled against his lost Kate, sunk unconscious on the doo'-step of the Cot of Flowers with a certain new blossom blooming freshly in her arms.

David Glendinning's lips did not quiver when he saw that which he had found. God, to whom morning, noon, and night, he had prayed, had given him his desire. There was nothing wonderful in that. The wonder would have been if He had not—though even that would not have shaken the man's faith. He bent and lifted up daughter and child both at once in his strong old arms and carried them to his own chamber. David Glendinning had no hesitations—no doubts. As the Eternal Father taketh in a wanderer at the Door-that-is-Never-Shut, so bent this rugged grim Old Grey Wolf, whose hand was against every man, the Ishmael of many a denominational camp, and gathered in his own unto him.

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Was there sin? No matter—the greater the need of in-bringing. Outcasting never yet saved a soul. Was there shame? Well, her shame would be his.

But God pity the man who should cast up either sin or shame to David Glendinning's ewe lamb, torn among the brambles! For that old face, which is now so tender, can flash teeth like the wolf they named him, taken in a trap. Beware—all ye whose tongues wag to your neighbour's hurt—have a care how ye speak of the Grey Wolf's litter. For none can wag a tongue with him—none follow so fast—none spring so far, strike so hard, or bite so deep!

But though these thoughts were working in that proud old heart, he carried the girl and her babe up together, as gently as a mother carries one sleeping child to its cot.

And his heart continually said, "Thank God—thank God—for *one*. The other—God who guided this, will guide her home as well!"

* * * * *

It was upon the stroke of noon. Kate lay in her own bed abovestairs still half unconscious, but warm and breathing. David Glendinning, whom the care of a sickly wife had made acquainted with many things, appointed himself on the spot nurse to Kate's baby, already making frequent declarations of being sound in wind and limb. He prepared cunning bottles as for a sucking lamb, with thread and fine old linen. He marched up and down between the kitchen and "ben-room," the child in his arms, singing softly:—

"God is our refuge and our strength"

arranged as a lullaby. Whatever might be the effects of her night venture upon the mother, the babe at least was healthy and safe. But as yet David Glendinning

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asked no questions, not even of himself. Why should he? A man who has read his Bible as long as he, needed to ask nothing.

Had he not stood on the tower's top looking towards that Far Country, whence all wandering children of the Great Father return? There—there in his doorway this bleak November dawn—lo, the wanderer! Well, he had expected nothing else. Quick with the best robe! No matter if it be but a worn Scots blanket. Purple and fine linen were not better in the sight of the God, who loves his folk to interpret His parables according to their havings. The ring for the finger? David Gledinning had no ring. Well then, what say you to a jar of hot water wrapped in flannel for these bruised prodigal feet? Kill the fatted calf? In time—in time! But just at present that teaspoonful of brandy administered with the dexterity and discretion of a nurse will do better than much fatted veal. The elder brother who would not come in? Lo, there he is in the yard—a whole group of him, triplets indeed—Will, Harry and Dick, the names of them.

They consult together. What is the meaning of all this? Are they shamed for ever? Shall eye and brow no more meet their neighbours'—equal-fronted and calm? Listen to the crying of that child! *Kate is come home!* What? How? Whence? Will, the eldest, is dull and sullen. He loves his sisters—would cut off his right hand for them. Woe be to Somebody! So much he understands! He will find out the rest! Harry is furiously angry—what will every one think of Harry? Spicing of selfishness there is in Master Harry, evident to be seen. Dick, thinking mostly of what the boys will say at school, only shakes his head dourly and mutters vague threats of vague vengeance.

To these three brethren who would not go in, came out this very remarkable father of the parable and thus entreated them in a single pregnant phrase

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"Boys, come your ways in!"

The Old Grey Wolf was not used to offer entreatments—commands and enforcements being more in his line, at least where his sons were concerned. Yet it was at this point that for the first time the parable failed.

For who had a better right than Will, and Harry, and Dick Glendinning to answer the answer of the parabolic elder brother, with personal comments added thereto.

"Lo, our father, these many years have we served thee, neither transgressed we at any time thy commandments (having indeed better judgment and a sounder regard for our skins!). And yet thou never gavest us kids and hot bottles and condiments and tendance. But as soon as this thy daughter!" And the rest of it. No, they did not answer thus.

Considerably no, indeed!

Instead they marched as silently "ben," as if they had been going to their places at "the Buik"—every man of them with eyes fronted and subdued mien—Will, and Harry, and rebellious Dick. And the Old Grey Wolf, grimly patient, held the door for them, with Kate's babe asleep on his arm.

Yet they had a kind of pride, too, because they knew that they were going to be present at a family council—a council of one. For so far as they were concerned the government of the Flower Cot was a pure Autocracy. David Glendinning signed them to precede him into the "ben-room," and at this they involuntarily trembled—for generally that place was to them a very Throne of Judgment. Had he heard their murmurings? What did it mean? They were soon to find out.

Now from the Sound of Wrath to the sands of Solway a Scottish family in difficult circumstances takes council, arranges conjoint action, settles in private the

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pattern of the face it is to wear before the world. Once made, its resolutions are irrevocable. Death will not unseal the lips that are sealed in such conclaves. Yet more and harder, the long wear and tear of life, its daily petty martyrdoms, cannot break down these resolutions. Will, Harry, and Dick, come in and have your lives moulded! There is a sister asleep upstairs and a babe weeping in the kitchen. Come in, I say!

Set your lips. Firm your faces. Front the world iron-visaged. You are not boys any more—you are men. Sorrow and hardship have come upon you somewhat earlier than to most of your race. But after all, there is no disgrace, save only when cowards will have it so.

"Come in, boys!"

So came their father out and entreated them, briefly and to the point, and so they went in.

And David Glendinning said, "Lads, neither you nor I can shut folks' mouths! But—by Him that Rides in Heaven we can mak' them michtily carefu' about opening them! There is your sister. Here on my arm is a bairn-child. I have asked no questions. I will answer none. If ony speer at ye once, answer civilly that ye ken naething. Whilk is God's ain truth. If a second speer at ye in a company, bid him mind his ain business. But if a third ask the question, mak' of him that which his ain mither would not recognise, if she fell on wi' him in her parritch. Strike him upon the cheekbone and the teeth, even as David struck at the Philistine—aye, were he ten times as great as that Goliath of Gath, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam, he shall be to thee as wax in the furnace! 'They that take the sword perish by the sword. It is dootless a great word and a true. But in the text there is naething said again neives—naething again feet that I ken o'. And forbye lads, ye hae nae swords at ony rate, and sma' skill in them if ye

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had. But as far as the natural weapons are concerned, gin ony man or boy cast up aught to ye aboot your sister, hew him in pieces before the Lord, even as Samuel the Prophet did to Agag in Gilgal!"

"But if the man's a woman—or the boy a lassie—what are we to do?" inquired practical-minded Will with superb indifference to the letter of logic.

And his father answered him cunningly, with the glint of the old Wolf ancestry in his eye.

"Answer them not at all at the first asking," he said, "but if she come at ye a second time, then consider if the woman hae a man or a son aulder than you, the lassie a brither or a sweethearting joe—then *mak' a hand o' them!* Never heed though ye are lickit. Mak' a hand o' them, I tell ye! Set a mark on their faces that they will carry to kirk and market for mony a day! That will mak' ye respectit! For the Lord sayeth 'Unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate me'—And what's richt for Him, canna be that verra wrang for us!"

Thus in the day of its agony and shame did the house of the Glendinnings of Boatcroft take council together, listening to the voice of its priest and king as he interpreted the stern Mosaic law of tooth for tooth, eye for eye, from the open page of the Old Testament, which lay beneath his hand.

And after that David took off his boots, and went on delicatest tiptoe upstairs to peep at Kate as she lay, breathing slowly and heavily upon her bed. He laid a peat upon the little fire, and twitched the curtains further over her eyes.

"In a deep sleep," he murmured softly to himself, "in a deep sleep, my bonnie. Bide ye so! Even so, I rejoice to see you! Whoso speaketh a word against thee, let his children be far from safety, and his bishopric let another take!"

And out in the back yard the three sons of the house

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of Glendinning, stripped to the grey wincey of their winter shirting, their arms peeled to above the elbow, were practising upon one another the Hewing of Agag in pieces before the Lord.

XXIX

FAIRLIE MAKES HER CHOICE

TO a house thus fortified (and certainly not divided against itself), enter a light figure of grace, daintily and yet severely clad. Gloved and buttoned with her usual neatness, the Gretchen braid tied with the broad ribbon, the blue eyes deep as the sea of tribulation through which she had come, Fairlie Glendinning walked at noon to her father's door, opened it, and went in all unannounced.

"Fairlie!"

"Father!"

"Hush—she is there!"

The scarred old joiner's hand points upward. The blanched look dies off the face. He does not kiss his younger daughter. He does not catch her in his arms as he did that other. She, though well-beloved as his eye-apple, does not need it. Very well able to care for herself, very definite and womanly in bearing, has Fairlie come back to the home she left almost a child-woman. David Glendinning knows in a moment that whoever has done wrong and forgotten the traditions of the house—that one is not his little Fairlie.

Then she stays him as he would have led the way upstairs and takes him by the hand to draw him "ben-the-hoose." For she too has something to say, which is for no ears but his. As they go through the darkling passage Fairlie momentarily presses the rough old hand against her breast. And the hard man feels the thrill, even to the quivering of his firm-set lips.

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Presently they front one another in the little parlour. Fairlie's prize books stand as of old on the shelves of the inlaid cabinet her father had made for them, their backs as vociferously gilt as ever. The girls' piano is in its own corner. Fairlie can see the dust on it from where she stands. All the familiar realities nerve her for what she has to say. The Old Grey Wolf watches her keenly,—the unspoken question on his face written plain to be read.

"Yes, father," she has caught and answered it, being a child no more, "but he is dead. Her husband, Rupert Glendonwyn is dead——"

"Thank God!" said David the carpenter, not at all in anger but with a light in his eyes beyond telling in words.

"Is dead,"—repeated Fairlie mechanically. "He was killed last night at the Green Dook bridge. John was with him. His father also at the last. I myself have seen him lie dead in the hall of Castle Gower. It was John who brought me to the corner of the road. And now, let me go to Kate. I knew in my heart, as if God had revealed it to me, that she would find her way home!"

She went upstairs, where in the little hushed familiar chamber, is the babe and the mother of the babe. David Glendinning with his chin bowed on his breast sat thinking. His hands were clasped between his knees. He heard above him a moving of quiet feet—then a sharp cry suddenly checked—then a prolonged whispering. He stole up to the door and opened it very gently.

"Thank God!" he said for the third time that day. "Kate is awake. She is sobbing her heart out on her sister's breast. So far all is well!" But he hears her ask about Rupert, her husband. How will it be when she knows that he is dead? David is wise, but he cannot answer that question.

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Well at any rate, however, that may be, better it is than that he should on any terms be alive. And there came a hard bitter expression over the countenance of the Old Grey Wolf. What shall be done to those who have tried to rob and dishonour—to steal and to devour? He thought of the two over there at Castle Gower, the proud father pacing the hall alone with the dead—and his soul exults.

"Babylon the Great is fallen—is fallen," so his heart sang with a kind of uplift that was almost a chant. At the Green Dook it was. Ah, he knows the place. The proud is taken in his own snare. He remembers as if it were yesterday, when Gregory Glendonwyn prevented the road from running straight and level! And now his son—the breaker of homes, the ravisher——! But wait. He must think this out. If Rupert be dead, John Glendonwyn will be the heir. He—this younger Glendonwyn, loves Fairlie—his Fairlie! But no, a thousand times, no. One of the cursed brood is enough. Fairlie shall never be given to a Glendonwyn. He always hated the breed—yes—as Joshua hated the Canaanites, so he has hated them.

But Fairlie had said—her husband, Kate's husband, Rupert! Fairlie spoke ever the truth and no lie. Fairlie would not speak without knowledge. Then not John Glendonwyn but—but—could it be—this babe, Kate's bairn—whom he has been hursing and hushing on his well-accustomed father's arm that morning—he and no other was the heir of Gower, castle and cottage, tilth and pasturage.

"Ha,"—said David Glendinning, a thought flashing along his brain—a new idea striking like a thunderbolt into his soul, "then shall the house of the proud be indeed cast down. The child of my body should sit in the mansion that was his great-grandfather's. Kate Glendinning's child, his grandchild—heir of the heritage his grandfather flung away!

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"But stay—not so fast! Has it come to this, Davvid Glendinning, that you who have never accepted a favour from any man, should take this greatest one from the son of Gregory Glendonwyn? Will you bow the stubborn knees? Kiss the extended hand of your house's enemy? Is this what he must say?

"Sir, your son did me the honour to blacken the name of my daughter—to steal her from her father's house, to keep her concealed for months while these grey hairs blanched to whiteness and the soul within me sickened with the deferring of hope. Therefore because you have done these things, I, Davvid Glendinning take with gratitude and thankfulness the crumbs of belated repentance that fall from your table! Out—begone, get thee behind me, Satan! Never, by God's grace shall I own for me or mine any connection with the name of Glendonwyn—never take art or part with them—past, present or to come. So help me God!"

This beginning of resolutions made David Glendinning as he sat listening to the light to-and-fro of Fairlie's feet above his head, and to the heir of the ancient Glendonwyns proclaiming his right to a yet older heritage—that mother's milk which is the after-solace of the Eden sin.

There came a knocking to the outer door, and straightway to his feet rose the Grey Wolf. Surely there is a gleam of strong canines as he lifted his grizzled upper lip. Has the battle begun? Well then, have at it! I will be avenged of thee, O mine enemy!

* * * *

David Glendinning opened the door—half opened it, rather, and peered out from under shaggy brows. On the doorstep stood John Glendonwyn, very pale and grave. He held out his hand, but as he did so David slowly put his own behind his back.

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"What would you with me or any in this house, John Glendonwyn?" he asked, bitter as acid dropping upon copper.

"May I come in and speak with you, sir?" pleaded John humbly.

"I desire no converse with you or yours for ever and ever," the words came very low but perfectly clear to be understood. "Say what you have to say on my doorstep and be gone!"

"My brother was killed last night," said John Glendonwyn, "but before he died he told me that your daughter—your eldest daughter, was his wife and that——"

"That he had robbed the poor man at his gate," hissed David Glendinning, with a concentrated hatred, yet slow and calm, "that he stole away his neighbour's ewe lamb at unawares—these things he told you ere he went to his own place—well—what more?"

"He bade me care for her. And I—promised him that I would!" stammered John Glendonwyn, who had come quite unprepared for such an attitude on the part of Fairlie's father.

"I thank ye, John Glendonwyn—kindly I thank ye!" the words of the Grey Wolf were few and bitter as gall, "but my daughter needs neither care nor succour—least of all from one of your name. From you and yours, I and mine claim nothing. We will receive nothing. Go your ways! There in front of you is the gate of my dwelling. See that you do not again cast your shadow across it. That is all I ask from you and yours. Of marriage and heirship, care, protection, compensation—all your fine phrases I reckon not a jot. Keep them to plaster your own cruel pride. You may need them yet, you Glendonwyns, before you win with credit off the footstool. Stand away—I warn you! After this I shall not be answerable for what may happen if any one of you enter within my walls again.

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I am no seeker of the great, God knows. They have never done me good, but only evil all the days of my life. I am the man that was robbed, but, out of a great depth, I have gotten mine own again. And by the Lord, sir, I will keep it! Get forth from me before I lift the broad axe to ye, John Glendonwyn."

"But," argued John, standing his ground like the valiant man he was, "I only ask for justice. I have had nothing to do with the matter, sir, as you yourself admitted. I had your word for it in Edinburgh—in my own rooms. I am not my brother's keeper. His errors are not mine, nor their consequences. I have told you that I love Fairlie Glendinning sole in all the world—I hold myself bound in honour to your daughter. Though I have never spoken a word of love to her, and (from my lips, at least) she knows not that I love her. Yet neither you nor any man has a right to stand between us if she loves me. More than that, by my brother's death, I am now my father's heir, and I claim the right to do justice to his widow!"

And above at the little stairhead Fairlie Glendinning, listening to the earnest voice of her lover, and the stern sentences of her father hurriedly clutched at the door handle and shut the door gently.

"Warner and his father have not told him about the child," she murmured, "he does not know. He thinks he is the heir. And he shall not know—no, not if I have to take the babe to myself—to be my own."

She stood there fixed, held rigid as marble by the intensity of her thought. She was hardly conscious of her father's voice calling her to come down. Yet when she came to herself she obeyed mechanically and, with all the life-blood tingling to her finger-tips at her lover's words, she descended the little staircase.

John was still standing without upon the doorstep, and her father held a large muscular arm across the portal as if to bar his entrance. At sight of her pale

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face John made an impulsive movement forward, but David Glendinning held his ground.

"Stand back," he cried, "there are no dealings between the Jew and the Samaritan. Fairlie, I give you your choice. God forbid I should be hard with you this day of all days. If you needed it, would I not take you up in my arms as I did Kate this morning? But here is a man who says that he loves you. Against himself I have nothing to say. But those of his house—his father and his brother—have made my heart old and hateful before its time. Between them they have broken the peace of the happiest house in Scotland. They have killed your sister. Now, lass, there stands a Glendonwyn. Will you go with him or will you stay with your father? Answer!"

It was to Fairlie a hard and a cruel question. And at that moment John said nothing to help her. He only stood silent amid David Glendinning's torrent of words—tongue-tied, stock-still, impotent.

Oh, if he would but speak, thought Fairlie—why does he not speak?

And if John Glendonwyn had not been John the Unready all his life, he might have ended his courtship there and then—or so at least Fairlie thought. But he stood dumb and numb, without a look or even a gesture after that first impulse towards her.

"After all, things are changed now—with him—" (Fairlie pretended to herself that she thought this.)

"He is like the other—now that he considers himself the heir. I would only spoil his prospects, he thinks, as well in the parish as with his father."

And a curious light glowed in the blue eyes. The shoulders straightened up with something like anger.

"If he wants me, he must woo me quite otherwise than that," she thought, casting up her proud little head.

And aloud she said, "I will stay with my father."

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Now John Glendonwyn was sore driven that day. He had ridden far for the sake of this girl, without rest or sleep or food or thought of self. He had seen his brother die in his arms, taken him home, and left his father there, like a strong man stricken down in his pride of strength. But John felt that it was neither the time nor the place to state his objections to the unfair dealing of David Glendinning. He only lifted his hat and was turning away gently, when Fairlie taking her father by the wrist, suddenly and strongly set his arm aside from the doorpost.

"John," she called out in that clear low voice always so pleasant to hear, "I would like to shake hands with you, John!"

And bravely and simply, before her father and brothers, she shook hands with John Glendonwyn. Then she went in and shut the door.

XXX

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

THE door of the Flower Cot being thus shut against him, and indeed against all the world, it was with infinite earnestness that John went back to his duties in the parish of Gower. Death had touched him on the shoulder that night in the Green Dook and though the bony fingers had slipped aside, John Glendonwyn stood ever after in a new relation to the Things-which-do-not-yet-Appear.

"Two women shall be grinding at the mill—the one shall be taken and the other left!" So the stern message rang all day and every day in his heart. The countryside talk, which dealt so freely with the last days of Rupert his brother, his strange death, and the return of Kate and Fairlie Glendinning to their home, failed to reach or affect him. The light in the little manse window was now seldom extinguished. He grew so diligent in visitation that there was in the parish no ploughman's sick bairn that he had not visited twice in a week.

Poor, struggling farm-folk, and yearly tenants, who had long feared the hand of Gregory Glendonwyn, and anticipated with double fear the incoming of spendthrift Rupert, had hope suddenly opened to them with the thought that this slender, blue-eyed young minister of theirs was to be the greatest landlord in the countryside. But all this appeared to add nothing to John Glendonwyn's consequence or in any way to alter the rigid simplicity of his life. After the

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funeral of his brother (which, very characteristically, Gregory Glendonwyn carried out upon a scale of expense which was entirely without parallel in the district), it had been generally understood as a settled thing, that the minister should return to Castle Gower. It was even rumoured that he would resign the pastoral charge of his parish.

John Glendonwyn did neither. On the evening after the funeral he went quietly back to the manse, and from that as a headquarters continued his ministrations as before. Indeed it was only thus that he could live with any comfort. His father and he found themselves of entirely opposite sentiments upon all the great problems of church and state. More and more, since his son Rupert died and his mind had been eased of the haunting fear of the Glendinning complication, (John now being heir to the estate and the matter of the trust-money having been arranged by John's readiness to yield his fortune to his father without a question asked or answered), Gregory Glendonwyn had thrown himself with all the vigour and bitterness of his nature into the political aspects of the great controversy.

He was, of course, by virtue of his position the leading elder in the parish of Gower—though during the incumbency of the Reverend Gilbert Aiblins he had mostly attended the church of Kilgour, where Dr. Cæsar's preaching and opinions were more to his taste.

It was in this way indeed that father and son first came across each other in public life. Since Rupert's death Gregory had treated John in every respect as the heir of Castle Gower, and on several occasions he had even ridden over to ask his advice with regard to the cutting of trees or the putting in of new plantations.

"You are to be Laird some day," he would say, "and since you have a large interest in the estate—and indeed were the chief means of rescuing it from the

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results of my poor boy's folly—it is right that you should be consulted upon all matters which may affect its value in the future.”

And on such occasions John Glendonwyn gave to his father the same grave, calm attention he never denied to any of his parishioners. He considered the problems of wood-forestry and the rebuilding of farmsteadings with the same equal mind which he devoted to the question whether Betty Salvison's kail-yard should, as a paying speculation, contain most cabbages or most potatoes.

But between father and son there was no real confidence, no intimacy, no fellowship.

However, John still dined at the Castle regularly once a week and listened to his father's talk concerning the manifold diseases of the body politic, abstaining carefully all the while from any expression of his own opinion. It was one of the most cherished of Mr. Glendonwyn's beliefs that whatever he undertook, he could carry through. And in general, to own the truth, his success was not incommensurate with this useful article of faith.

Now, as we know, he had never liked his younger son, nor indeed had he ever considered him at all, save as an unmitigated nuisance and as dividing the inheritance with Rupert. More than ever of late, his easy readiness to part with his maternal fortune had gained him his father's contempt. Above all, it never struck Mr. Glendonwyn that in any matter, ecclesiastical or civil, John would disobey him, or offer any opposition to his father's authority in the parish which he looked upon as his own, root and branch.

To the mind content with observing the superficial aspects of character, there may appear something incongruous or even impossible about the fact that a man so indifferent to the ordinary claims of humanity as Gregory Glendonwyn, so eager to sacrifice all who

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stood in the way of his interest or ambitions, should yet be earnestly and genuinely interested in a great religious controversy.

But in reality the two things hang together—at least in Scotland. Pride of place and name was at the root of both matters. Mr. Gregory Glendonwyn of Gower was a great landlord, the unquestionable head of an ancient race. He was also patron of the parish. His manifest duty therefore was to see to it that his rights, religious and civil alike, were not invaded. The family motto "Glendonwyn over all" represented with much concision his standpoint on every question.

If his son John possessed money which could rescue the estates from ruin, it was a father's right—nay—his bounden duty to use that money, as it were, in trust for the family. If his son objected, he was no true Glendonwyn. If he did not, he was a fool. Had not he, Gregory Glendonwyn, made his second son minister of the parish of Gower? It was his duty therefore, first of all to promote the worship of Glendonwyn within the bounds, to preach the Gospel of "Great is Glendonwyn of Gower" in season and out. For this sole purpose he had been ordained, made a member of various presbyteries, synods and assemblies of the Kirk. Now, be it understood, there was at this time a party in the Church which wished to lessen and even overturn the right of the principal landlord of a parish to choose the minister of that parish. The exercise of this right represented in many cases sterling coin of the realm. To countenance such robbery, as the abrogation of that vested right was therefore treason and folly in one—treason to the name of Glendonwyn, because tending to lessen its consequence—folly because one day John Glendonwyn himself, as heir, might be called upon to exercise that right, over against an equivalent in hard cash. Now, ac-

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According to the Glendonwyn gospels, no man robs his own pocket, but nourishes and cherishes it. If he does not, he is to be accounted insane.

Small wonder then that John Glendonwyn, who had grown into more serious and spiritual thoughts during the lonely days in the manse, who had seen his brother snatched from his side by a sudden stroke, whom the sight of bitter want and sorrow among the poor had made grave before his time, should find himself in somewhat scanty sympathy with the great Glendonwyn creed. He could not accept its thirty-nine articles—which in fact consisted of the family motto repeated thirty-nine times.

To the view of this supra-Erastian laird of Gower the Kirk of Scotland only existed in order to protect the statutory and vested interests of Gregory Glendonwyn, chief heritor and sole patron of the parish of Gower, while the civil courts were established solely to protect his properties landed and founded, his leases, feus, fishings, pastures, tillages, nolt, sheep, swine and other bestial, including (if mentally) his two sons and all their various property and dependents.

Gregory Glendonwyn was strong and diligent on the side of Law and the Church, for the very potent and unanswerable reasons given above. He delivered harangues in public meetings, which often made bitter the lot of his friends—men like Dr. Augustus Cæsar of Kilgour, deeply and personally convinced that the Non-Intrusion propaganda was evil in itself, and would in the end prove hurtful to the best interests of the Kirk, men who had reasoned and unselfish objections to secession, men who desired nothing better than that the Church, having placed herself under the control of the civil power in matters temporal and financial, should live patiently and peaceably under such jurisdiction, even when in the hands of ignorant or prejudiced

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statesmen, the shoe was made to pinch somewhat rudely at times.

But Mr. Glendonwyn would stand upon no such terms with the party of liberty. To their faces or behind their backs they were rebels, long-tongued fools, meddlers and busybodies, self-seekers and vainglorious, to be upset, brow-beaten, utterly rooted out of any society of honest, right-thinking men!

Gregory Glendonwyn's state of mind may be imagined, therefore, when at the close of a great meeting in Kilgour, summoned to support the Government in its refusal to grant the exorbitant demands of the evangelical party in the church, the Reverend John Glendonwyn, being called upon to speak to the question, delivered a strong, clear, determinate, but quietly worded declaration of his adherence to the most ancient and inviolable of the privileges of any Church—the right to be supreme in spiritual things within her own borders.

As the first words of this incredible sedition fell on Gregory Glendonwyn's ears he started, and then began to listen incredulously, as if not able to credit the evidence of his senses. But before John had proceeded far with his speech, his father started to his feet, crying, loud enough to be heard to the limits of the hall—"He is mad! He is mad! Sit down, sir! You have no right to speak here! Sit down!"

John waited patiently till his father had exhausted himself and then tranquilly resumed his argument.

"I was invited here," he said, "at least as I understood the matter, for the purpose of expressing my opinions on the subject under discussion. And I do not mean to leave the hall till I have done so. Am I within my rights, Mr. Chairman?"

With infinite dignity and grace, Dr. Augustus Cæsar intimated that his young friend stood perfectly within his rights in fully expressing his views, however oppo-

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site these might be to those held up by the majority of the persons present, or even to the purpose for which the meeting was called.

"Then if that be so," cried Mr. Glendonwyn, bouncing violently from his seat, "I for one will not sit still and listen to a pack of treasonable rubbish from the lips of an ignorant time-serving fool, foisted into a position for which he is manifestly unfit, and with whom I desire no further dealings in public or private!"

And so saying, he hurriedly left the meeting, and, ordering his horses drove directly home. John was still speaking when the rumble of the Castle Gower carriage passing the door of the Town Hall announced to him that he would have the pleasure of walking homeward through the snow-drifts to his lonely manse, instead of sharing the soft interior cushions on the seat opposite his father.

But it is probable that the young man cared more for the approving nod he received from Veronica Cæsar, who had brought down her father to the meeting, as she said, "packed in cotton wool" and was now in waiting to repack him and take him back to his home when all was over.

"I do not in the least agree with you, John," said Veronica, shaking him by the hand. "Of course I came here to cry, 'Well done, our side!' as every right minded daughter ought. And more than that, after all, the ministers who are so bold against the Government have taken the stipend with their eyes open, and must stand by the agreement, even though some of the clauses are a trifle tightly drawn, and have not been very strictly enforced for some time. And I think the Government quite right to take its pound of flesh when it is in need of butcher meat, and—well—it does not matter what else! All the same I am proud of you, John, far more glad than if you had said a hundred 'dittoes' to your father. Stand to it, lad, and at any

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time you want a friend, count on Veronica Cæsar to stand by you!"

John walked back to the manse of Kilgour with Dr. Cæsar and his daughter that night, and not a word of dispraise escaped the lips of the grand old Moderate. On the contrary he complimented John with the utmost warmth and good humour upon his appearance.

"All nonsense, of course," he said, "pardon me for saying so—John Glendonwyn—but clearly put and full of enthusiasm—the effervescence of youth which time will drain off, but perfectly natural and a thousand times better and more hopeful than the utterances of many official Gallios!"

"Ah, I used to be something of a Gallio, too," said John, blushing, "but—but many things have happened to me lately. And I have been casting up my position as well as I could. I must do what I can."

Veronica pressed his arm a little in the darkness. She understood him to mean his brother Rupert Glendonwyn's terrible death at the Green Dook.

"Won't you come in, John, and bide all night at the manse," said the charitable old Christian minister, as staunch in his hospitality as he was stout in his Erastianism, "Come your ways in and over a tumbler of good Tallisker if I do not convince you that you are wrong—why, you can convince me. You will have the greater glory. I am entirely open to conviction. But—I should like to see the man that could convince me!"

But John was too sad at heart to have any desire for the large hospitalities of Kilgour Manse, and though Veronica seconded her father's invitation with a warmth quite unusual with her, he steadily refused, urging the work that he had to do in the morning in the upper part of his wide parish.

"Well, well, lad," said the Doctor, "have it e'en as ye say. I daresay ye wad like to mak' it up with your faither. But listen to me. I have not kenned Gregory

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Glendonwyn these fifty years without kenning also that the best way to please him, is just to thwart him, and stand up to him, and brow-beat him, and defy him. All which, my boy, the Lord o' battles gie ye the grace to perform. Guid-nicht!"

Veronica shook John's hand silently, with only the least possible little sigh, perhaps for an old companion carrying a saddened heart and grave eyes into the darkness, into which she was unable to bring any light. She had thought that for to-night at least, when all the bairns were in bed, he and she might have had some talk of old things and new. For, though she never allowed it to herself, Veronica had but few pleasures in life and even those inclined to duty's flavour, somewhat medicinal and stern.

When John wheeled so sharply at the manse door, he turned up the collar of his coat, sunk his hands fathoms deep in his pockets, and set out heel-and-toe at a good warming four-mile gait for the manse dining-room where Babby Lockhart was sitting up for him, with the identical rice-and-milk he had been fond of as a child, simmering on the hob. For Babby, though willing to render up her life for her "bairn," did not believe in "pamperin" him up with any funeral baked meats, but on the contrary, kept him healthy and meagre upon an ascetic nursery dietary, as wholesome and flavourless as Veronica's pleasures.

"If Auld Betty hadna keepit her e'e on him thae cook bodies in the Castle Gower kitchen wad hae stuffit him like a turkey," she would say. "Fegs, they wad that. And when he could rin and get intil the gairden at berry-time—my faith gin I hadna garred him dowp dinnle mony's the time—he micht never hae leeved to wag his heed in a poopit—na, faith! But atween the green berries no agreein' wi' his stammack and the wecht o' my loof on his hinderend, Auld Betty Lockhart made a new man o' John Glendonwyn.

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"Aye, and when he grew big he didna forget her either. For when I telled him that I was comin' up to the manse to keep hoose till him, I juist let him ken that I wad come on my ain terms. First, there were to be nae misleart hizzies caperin' an' skippin' about—cooks an' hoose-maids an' table-maids, but just decent Auld Babby that had sorted him ever since the time when a bit sark and a hippen was a' his cleadin'! Babby wad lay oot his claes and he wad pit them on when bidden like a guid bairn. An' he wad eat wi' a thankfu' heart what was set afore him—plenty o' guid halesome meat, but nae ragoos an' sauces an' pamperin'—na, na! Siclike is guid for neither man nor minister! Forbye he wad never affront me by payin' me wages till I asked for them, and he wad gie me a year's warnin' afore mairryin'—or else let me hae the choosin' o' the lass mysel!

"Me kennin' fine that Maister John could never mak' up his mind aboot onything sae lang afore hand. For when Auld Betty gied up her bit hoosie, doon by at Clarty Hole, wi' the midden stead within ten yairds o' the door and the bonny pig-hoose and hen-laift a' aneath the same roof, as convenient and commodious as ony pailace—to come to a great cauldfrife place like the Manse o' Gower, wi nocht aboot it ready to your hand but plenty o' cauld water—*ochanee*, but it was a sore dooncome for Auld Betty and she didna want to be turned oot again to fend for hersel' by ony bit lass that likit to glint a cunning e'e at the young minister. Na, faith, Betty kenned better! The limmers, they wad think the Manse o' Gower a gye snug doonsettin', I'm thinkin', and they wadna scunner to pit Maister John to a' kind o' expense for furnishin's, baths, basins and siclike wasterfulness! Oh, there's nae end to the trashery the daft craiturs wad want. As if a guid washin' tub or a hole in the linn werena guid enouch to wash them wi', withoot scents and essences! Nor

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the caller air fit to breathe, nor the braid hillside sufficient unto their needs, nor God's ain yird to walk on as it cam frae His hand; but it maun be levelled an' gravelled and plantit wi' shrubs to make it faceable. Na, I'm an auld woman and set in my ways. And sune—sune Auld Betty maun gang afore her Maker, but she is no gaun to burden her conscience wi' the like o' ony siccan bravery—of which the Prophet Isaiah himsel' spak, when he said, in the Third Chapter and Auchteenth verse (Oh I ken it weel. Aften hae I recommendit it to Maister John! For he was aye a kennin' saft aboot the lasses—though, Guid kens, no like his brither that was a wild rampin' Turk a' the days o' him—an he-goat on the mountains of Bethel!) Weel, what says Isaiah? 'Their tinklin' ornaments, and their cauls and their round tires like the moon—their rings and their nose jewels! Certes, they maun hae been beauties, thae daughters o' Zion wi' rings in their noses! I kenna what the men war thinkin' o' to hae had onything to do wi' the like o' them! They maun hae lookit like sae mony howkin' pigs or tinklers' cuddies gaun to a fair—ten times waur than Bell McLandsborough gaun intil the kirk wi' a hale hay-stack o' gumfloors, ontill her bonnet, that nae man ever saw the like o'—Daughters o' Jerusalem indeed! I wonder what the provost o' that toon was thinkin' o'—to let them gang aboot the streets! There's auld Dunty Corsan, the provost o' Kilgour, wee doited draiglin' body that he is, but even he wad hae kenned better than to let the hizzies carry on like that in the verra High Street o' Zion—wi' their mantles (set them up!) and their crimpin' pins and their glasses and stomachers and suits o' changeable attire!—I dinna ken what *they* may be, but yince I was in a circus, when I was young and silly, and there was a sailor there that cuist a' his claes on horseback, ridin' roond and roond. And first when he took aff his jacket I leuch, and when

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he cam' to his waistcoat, I stoppit; but when he laid hands on the band o' his breeks—But there, it was, as yin might say, a fause alairm! For in anither meenit, there afore our 'een was a sodjer clad a' in reid frae heid to fit, and syne he gaed himsel' a shake and lo! he was like a jockey horse-dealing body, and syne after that a market-woman—verra featly pitten on too—I wull alloo!”

These were the sentiments with which, enlarged to their uttermost, and served up with ever fresh sauce of incident and reminiscence, Babby Lockhart entertained her weary laddie as he sat at dinner and supper in the lonely Manse of Gower. Who shall blame him if after a while he answered at random, without listening to more than a tithe of Babby's vituperative wisdom?

Nevertheless on this particular night he had time to pause a while in the shadow of a wood, and look up long at a certain window in the defenced house of Boatcroft, that Flower Cot to which there never now gathered as of yore the blythe groups of young wooers in the gloaming. For indeed in these dark latter days none were allowed to cross the threshold save only David and his three boys, the proper litter of the Old Grey Wolf.

John Glendonwyn stood long in the shade of the firwood, before he strode away determinedly in the direction of his manse, with the air of one putting impossible things behind him—where between his books and his sermon-writing his light burned long and long through the bleak and bitter hours of the morning.

XXXI

THE SETTING UP OF THE BLUE BANNER

JOHAN GLENDONWYN had counted the cost ere he joined that memorable array which streamed out of Saint Andrews' Kirk in Edinburgh town, on the 18th day of May. He was well aware that he must be content to give up much, though even then he did not yet know the full extent of his self-sacrifice.

John was not a member of the famous Assembly, but he had journeyed to the city to see the things which should be brought to pass there. He found a bed at his old lodgings at Davie Dean's houses, the window looking out on the King's Park of Halyroodhouse, as is its true ancient name and style. It was indeed that identical room in which he had found David Glendinning on his return from Craigmillar, that snell-blowing day of April, and in it he was now to receive a very different visitor.

John was sitting melancholy by the fireside, empty, swept, and garnished like his life, as it appeared to him at that moment. For, having travelled far from the companions of his youth in thought and experience, and being (save for a few intimates) a hermit by nature, there was no house in the city where he had been invited to sojourn as a guest, as is Edinburgh's hospitable wont at Assembly time. It was said on the other hand that sixteen houses contended (like Homeric birth-cities), for the presence of that noted

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churchman and leader among the faithful, Dr. Augustus Cæsar.

Nevertheless it was none other than that same Augustus Cæsar, grand beyond words in his fine frilled neckcloth, and simple too in the dignity of his broad noble brow and white hairs, above all noble in the simplicity of his nature—none surpassing him in any of these, save perhaps his opponent—the man who was to lead the Exodus on the morrow from that Zion whose very walls were dear to both of them.

“John,” said the church leader, setting a hand affectionately on his shoulder, “you do not well that I should find you here. You are a young man and you should be with the young. You are not of the faithful of Judah indeed. But why—among your own, is there no tent among the thousands of Israel that holds comrades for John Glendonwyn?”

“Ah, Doctor,” said John, “it is more than kind to come to see me—I know how many tents there are where you will be missed to-night—in order that you may have time to call on a lonely, sulky fellow like myself!”

“Well—well,” said Dr. Cæsar, “perhaps I may look in at a mess or two to-night yet, here and there throughout the camp! But sit down, lad, I have known you and yours so long. John, that I can’t let you go like this. Are you really bent on leaving us?”

John shook his head wistfully.

“I see no other way out of it,” he said, “some men are made one way—some another. I wish I could think as you do, Doctor! But it has grown on me during all these months. My light is but a farthing rush-light at best. I am a sad long way from the sun, but—I must follow such light as I have.”

“Doubtless, doubtless,” said Dr. Cæsar, “only be sure that it is no will-o’-the-wisp you are following

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into a quagmire. First of all, how do you like the company you find yourself among?"

John smiled as he looked round the bare old Edinburgh lodgings. He saw on the walls portraits of the tombstones of the landlady's relatives unto seventeen generations, a worn green tablecloth on the table, plentifully ornamented with ink splotches—(John recognized some that he had made himself)—a shiny hair-cloth sofa with one spring broken in so cunning a place that however you lay upon it the broken spar took you squarely in the small of the back.

"You are all my company," John answered, smiling sadly, "and I hope you do not object to the excellence of that. There are few so favoured."

"I mean the men with whom you will be brought into connection and contact—not the leaders—I do not mean the leaders, who are men of family and standing like ourselves. However you in the country will see but little of them when once they have got you to follow them—save, that is, in the way of raising money for their schemes. But the country ministers of the Gilbert Aiblins stamp——"

"I have not let these considerations affect me," said John, "indeed I have not thought of them. I shall have my work among the people who adhere to me—if any such there be. For I have not put a question on the subject to any man, woman or child within the parish of Gower."

The Doctor held out his hand silently.

"By the by," he went on after a long pause, "have you seen anything of our friend your predecessor, Gilbert Aiblins? He was great, I heard, at the Convention last November—yet I have not seen him or heard of him in the city."

"He may arrive yet," said John, "perhaps the coach has broken down on the way."

"It is just possible," said the Doctor drily, "I con-

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ceive it is just possible. Benbushel is a good stipend and Gilbert wrote me recently that he was sure of an augmentation of eight chalders in the autumn—which does not look much like sacrificing all for principle.”

“On the main question my mind is clear,” said John Glendonwyn, reverting to himself, “whoever stays, I must go. But there is no great sacrifice for me. I have a private income, the prospect of more at my father’s death (May he live a thousand years!), I am a bachelor and likely to remain one. There are many who have been many years in their homes, who have long enjoyed considerable incomes, who have large families to educate—will they (think you?) stand to their principles to-morrow?”

The Doctor half closed his eyes, meditatively, as if he studied unseen things. “I have heard a great deal of talk, on my own side of the house, as to that,” he said. “‘There will not be fifty,’ says one. ‘There will not be twenty,’ says another.—‘Only such as are deeply compromised or have chapels of ease in the large cities,’ cries a third. I have heard the number of ministers who will leave their manses and endowments put as low as the ten righteous men whom Abraham vainly desiderated in Sodom—and still there was doubt whether or no they would be found. I have never held any such ignoble opinions.”

Doctor Augustus Cæsar paused again and something noble welled up from his heart and showed in his countenance.

“No—I think better of my country,” he cried. “I may believe your people are wrong-headed, enthusiastic, incapable of looking at both sides of a question. But what you have said, you will stick to. I think the work of to-morrow will surprise all the world. Gad, sometimes I wish I could think differently and that I had been coming out with you! But at any rate I came

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to tell you that whatever doors are shut to you, John, there will always be one where you will find a welcome waiting—and that is, at the Manse of Kilgour. Veronica also bade me say so on her account. That is, supposing that Heaven does not send you some increment of commonsense before the morning."

* * * * *

On the next day John stood waiting outside Saint Andrew's Kirk among the thousands who lined the wide breezy trough of George Street. Clear, fresh, and cool, a pearl of a day it was—the white clouds blowing high over domed St. George's at the street's end. Then down every north-looking vista, lo! the green fields along the firth, the intense indigo strip of the sea and the dim blue hills of Fife gracious in the distance. Across there too, folk were waiting with eager hearts, straining eyes and ears for the hoisting of the ancient banner of spiritual independence—for the trumpet from the walls which should proclaim, "Come ye out of her! Be ye separate!" Indeed all Scotland north and south waited breathless for the issue.

"They are long! What can keep them?" "Nonsense, don't tell me!—They will not come at all! Catch a minister signing away his stipend for conscience sake!" "It will all end in talk!" "Twenty at most——" "Well, thirty!" So ran the talk and gossip along causeway and pavement.

There were shrewd lawyers there of the two Scottish types, the grey and formal, keen-eyed and gravely courteous; and the jovial, openly facetious, stormily-jocular. Besides these, all the world was out to see.

These knew but little—as little as the ragged urchins who pressed as closely along the skirts of the crowd, as about a circus procession. Equally ignorant

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were the busy tradesmen who had snatched an hour's holiday to watch the event. But there were others, like John—country ministers who had no place within, but waited patient and silent to take part in the last act of that triumphant surrender which had cost them so many anxious thoughts.

And there, more moving than aught else, for those with eyes to see, dotted here and there among the throng, quite recognisable by their anxious looks and pale faces, stood certain women also of the graver sort—on whom that day's work would fall infinitely more heavily than even on the men whom they had encouraged to stand in the battle-front. These were the wives of the seceding ministers, the outed mistresses of manse, mothers in Israel whose well accustomed places should know them no more. But no tears fell while the great concourse stood waiting, or at least none which was not instantly brushed away by the hand of faith as if it had been a matter of actual shame.

Suddenly a hush, a murmur, a vast electric throb! The gasp of a sob seemed to run swiftly insurgent through the mighty throng. The universal heart moved responsive.

"They are coming!" "Here they come!" "Ah, look!—Hats off there!"

There was no shouting, no cheering as for a great deed done soldierly and well, but instead only silence and awe and reverence. Yes, there they were descending the steps—Welsh, and Chalmers and Gordon all abreast. Behind them, came file after file, row upon row till the procession, a black band, solid and far reaching, undulated away into the dim distance towards Tanfield.

John Glendonwyn waited almost till the end, and then fell in beside an old college companion, still churchless, who only said, "Hello, Glendonwyn, what

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are you doing here?—You used to be on the other side.”

“Ah,” said John Glendonwyn grimly, “even Lazarus may come forth.”

And at that moment, standing close to the procession as it streamed down the hill, his eyes met those of Veronica Cæsar. She did not speak, but she gave him a quick nod which said, “I am proud of you, John!”

Ah, if John had known all that was in the girl’s heart at that moment—but no, it could not be. John had bestowed all his heart on Fairlie Glendinning, and what would it have signified (save to give him pain), that there on the plain Edinburgh flags was a girl who would gladly have gone into the wilderness with him—not scorning the flesh-pots of Egypt indeed, but well able to conjure them out of the very weeds and nettles by the wayside.

Like many another, Veronica had been such good friends with John all her life that she did not want to marry him—till—there was danger of his marrying somebody else! But let us not anticipate.—That part of the tale is not yet.

* * * * *

Few of the outgoing ministers had so simple a row to hoe as John Glendonwyn. Or at least so it seemed to him at first. Afterwards, indeed, he saw reason to modify his opinion.

He had few moveables in the manse. It would be easy to find a cottage to hold his books, his camp-bed, and old Babby with her pots and pans. He would preach in the school-room. His personal wants were few, and if the people of Gower wished him he would remain among them.

But in these arrangements he found that he had reckoned without his father. Mr. Glendonwyn was

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fairly beside himself with wrath—his only son, his heir—a dissenter in his own parish. The hope of the Glendonwyns to abandon the church to which his father had presented him, of which he himself would one day be the patron. Small wonder that bitter anger flamed in Gregory Glendonwyn's heart, and blossomed not seldom in red eruptive fury upon his lips.

He denied his son the use of any cottage upon his estates of Gower. He sent Factor Halliday to warn all who should frequent schismatic meetings that by so doing they would not only forfeit their landlord's favour, but in all cases of yearly lease, their holdings also. A still severer penalty was to befall all who should entertain, encourage, or support the new dissenting minister, the only one indeed who had ever dared to set foot within the virginly Erastian parish of Gower.

"It's like the auld Covenantin' times," said Anton McMillan, Cameronian herd upon Bennangour.

"Aye,—but—withoot poother and ball," retorted another, less favourably impressed with the new system of things.

Anton eyed the speaker severely.

"What kens a bletherin' mender o' the laird's flunkies' breeks aboot poother an' ball?" he inquired with bitter irony (the critic being on his way to Castle Gower at that moment for the purpose thus pithily put by Anton:), "Maybes if ye were the laird's son ye micht think that ye were gettin' poother an' ball eneuch, to miss a' that braw lairdship and Castle Gower itsel', to leave ahint ye the heartsome manse an' no hae where to set your fit or lay your heid in a' the pairish that was as guid as your ain—maybe, ye wad think that nocht? Weel, gin ye think sae, come up for yae winter season to Bennangour wi' Auld Anton, and ye will learn different—you and your het

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guise irons and 'whuppin' the cat' frae ferm-toon to ferm-toon!"

"Then ye'll be gaun up to the auld quarry on the common neist Sabbath day, I'm thinkin'," said the tailor, "you that's sae fond a' at yince o' young Maister Glendonwyn will surely never bide awa?"

The question was cunningly put by the tailor, a little humped or "huckle-backed" man, with a sly tongue and great store of gossip acquired in passing from one farmhouse to another, making up the "ain claith" of the farmers and cottiers. This was the practice alluded to by Anton in the phrase "Whupping the Cat"—probably from the convulsive movement of a quick-sewing tailor's elbows as he works with his seam between his knees.

"Na," said Anton, "that will I no. Little guid wad I mak' by that. For what should I leave Maister Osbourne at Causevend to follow after ony uncovenanted ministry! To lea' the deil is no to be near to grace, though dootless it's sae far on the road!"

"Wha's caain' names noo?" cried Beld Barney the tailor aforesaid, "and what waur am I, that gangs but seldom to ony kirk, than you wha pretends to be sic a godly man, an' sae ta'en up about the young minister—and yet winna gie him a half-day's hearin' until his ain sanctified quarry hole. Faith, I wad do as muckle mysel' for a gill, an' think mysel' nane the waur!"

Anton McMillan disdained a reply. The tailor, in the things of the spirit, was not worth wasting powder and shot upon.

"Ye are a puir feckless craitur, Barney," he said for all answer, "I'm some dootfu' that ye maun hae been ahint the door when the brains were gi'en oot!"

And so whistling on his dogs Auld Anton of Bennangour rebuked them for behaviour unbecoming responsible colliers on their own hillside, and strode

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away up over the heather at his invariable pace of three miles and a quarter in the hour, up hill and down dale.

But when Anton had looked his sheep, taken supper in his lonely herd's house under the solemn lee of Bennanbrack, he indulged in an operation which considerably astonished his observant dogs.

One night in the week the tenor of their life was altered. At five of the clock they were all put out—no mercy or *agrotat* allowed—no place under table or beneath beds for any one of them. The yard was their portion while Anton "cleaned himself up." He could not be "tagled wi' messan dowgs *gurr-wurrin'* about his feet" when engaged in such an occupation, the next thing to a religious function. Anton was by no means uncleanly in his person and washed his face (strictly so called) every day more or less. But on Saturday night, he "cleaned himself up"—which was quite another thing. And so experienced collies, well-informed as to the course of events, and careful of their personal dignity, rose as soon as the razor and big strop were produced. It is a favourite practical joke with these bushy-tailed wags to leave a novice sleeping on the hearth (where indeed none but young foolish dogs would lie at any rate, to be trodden on, "goldered" at, spilt water upon and so forth) and then, voluntarily and timeously expatriating themselves, to sit on their "hunkers" in the yard to await the event. The sober historian cannot aver as matter of fact that they laughed, but that they smiled seems indubitable.

Then from within would come a sharp short word, a rush, a bumping of foolish flesh in too great a hurry to hit the open-half of the outer door, a bunched heap of yelps and tightly in-drawn tail, and (for a moment only visible) the practical end of a large hob-nailed boot.

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This was the time when the veterans Tyke and Tod are reported to have lain down and laughed—yes, even rolled over and over till they could laugh no more. But a corruption in the text is supposed, since it is a minister of the gospel who makes the assertion in clear script over his own signature. He says he has seen and heard these things.

At any rate on this particular evening the dogs withdrew promptly at the production of the strop and razor with a dim idea that if Clean-up-Saturday-Nights were to occur at such short intervals, life would hardly be worth living upon Bennangour. They must seek another service and a master of more fixed habits as to personal cleanliness.

But though this was not Saturday night, Anton "cleaned up" with more than usual fervour, so that a pink flush like scraped pork began to overspread all his visible flesh, and even appeared to invade the grey tangle of his locks.

For Anton McMillan, herd on Bennangour, Cameronian and practical Christian had a work on hand which must be done, ere he could rest sound in his bed.

When Anton appeared in the little yard where were his thatched byre and the tiny "office houses" which his own hands had built out of the granite boulders of Bennangour there in the midst were his collies Tod and Tyke—with Messan the novice aforesaid, now grown wiser and vacuating the hearth of his own proper initiative without application of the *force majeure*.

Is he going to the kirk or is he *not* going to the kirk? Tyke and Tod cocked their wise heads and thought. You can easily see a good collie think. No professor does it more obviously when asked a question in class. He has no Bible, for there is no hump in his tail coat pocket. So much against. On

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the other hand—he has taken his red handkerchief out of his Sabbath hat and wiped his brow. That means Kirk all the world over. In a moment more they would know, and in this way. There is a little gate where, on Sundays, he always turns round and shakes his stick at them. This means that they are not to follow him but to stay and look after the steading of Bennangour faithfully and well during his absence. If he takes no notice, they will be after him in a moment, tumbling over each other and barking, scouring the hillside like the wind for sheer joy of living, erected tails, cocked ears, and playfully snapping jaws—all because it is not yet the precise and playless Sabbath day of their native land.

Wicked dogs! Unnatural collies! Slink back there! It is the Sabbath and after the strictest sort. To your kennels in hay and peatshed! Read “Early Piety” and “The Course of Time” with vague hopes that they will do you good! Sleep and wait. For this night of all nights your master has paused at the gate and shaken his stick at you.

XXXII

THE HERD'S HOUSE OF BENNANGOUR

ANTON McMILLAN, herd on Bennangour was, however, not going to the kirk at that untimely hour. For once canine acumen had been at fault. All the factors of the problem were not known to Tod and Tyke. But (next best thing) he was going to the manse, that is to the Manse of Gower, to be vacated on the morrow by its tenants John Glendonwyn, ex-minister of the Kirk of Scotland, and his faithful servant, nurse, and dictator, Mistress Babby Lockhart.

The herd found the minister with his knees on a stubborn box of books, cording it with all his might while Babby stood in the background, inveighing against the folly, the improvidence—nay, the sinfulness even of having so many books.

“There juist can be nae guid in them awa,”—cried Babby; “noo, there was Paal an’ Silas—them that preached everywhere, that were in journeyings oft and shiwrackit every ither week—hoo could they hae carried onything like a’ that great cairt-load o’ buiks wi’ them? It’s juist no possible. An’ juist if ye please far be it frae me to find faut wi’ the likes o’ you—only ye micht think o’ Paal let doon frae the waa’ o’ Damascus in a basket, and then maybes twenty hunder-wecht o’ buiks faain’ on the tap o’ him, when he cried to them to send doon his carpet-bag after him! Oh, ye’ll never convince me——” *Et cetera*. The litany of Babby Lockhart had neither beginning nor ending.

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John Glendonwyn, with the end of one rope between his teeth and his hands engaged in knotting another, was incapacitated from prolonged argument on any subject. But he endured his mentor meekly and proceeded diligently with his packing.

Upon these two, finding an open door, a trunk-strewn hallway, and no reply to his repeated knockings, enter the herd of Bennangour.

"Well, Anton,"—cried the minister, genuinely astonished, "what brings you off the hill so early, and dressed for the kirk? Surely you have not left the lambs by themselves for so long, with only their mothers to look after them?"

For Anton's "eident" care of his flock had become a byword in the district.

"Aye, Maister John, an it please you, I hae left the lambs for the nicht. I hae a message I maun deliver!"

"From your master?" questioned John with some additional surprise. For Abraham Habbleshaw of Bennangour was an absentee—a large farmer residing in another parish and rarely occupying the farm steading of Bennangour, which he used mostly for storing odd parts of farm implements and tins of sheep-dip—always saving and excepting one cupboard in a locked room, in which were many bottles, glasses, and apparatus wherewith hot water might be obtained by the addition of fire to a cunning stove. Two chairs and a tin of biscuits from Gillone's were the only other furniture of Abraham Habbleshaw's private apartment at Bennangour.

Anton McMillan did not reply at once. He seemed to be in a brown study. So John had perforce to repeat his question.

"Have you come with a message from your master?"

"Aye, frae my maister!" said Anton, with gravity.

"Well?" said John, tugging fiercely at the last

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knot of his heaviest case, and rather wishing that the taciturn herd had chosen some other time for his visit.

"Ye will permit me to ask a question?" said Anton.

The young minister nodded without looking up.

"Ask away!" he said cheerfully.

"Ye are to be quit o' the manse by noon tomorrow?"

"That is the notice I have got from the clerk of Presbytery," said John, succinctly.

"Aye?" said Anton, "Weel, what may ye be thinkin' o' doin'?"

"Doing?" said John Glendonwyn, "well, for the present I thought of taking lodgings in the town of Kilgour and walking out to visit any who might desire my ministrations."

"That will be verra inconvenient," commented the herd, with grave deliberation.

"Doubtless," said John, a little irritably, "but you see, Anton, beggars cannot be choosers. It is that or nothing. There is not a man in Gower who would dare take me in—not a house that will shelter me and mine."

"Aye but there is—," said Anton, suddenly, with a lift of his mountainous brows, and a gleam of the fearless hill-man's eye, "there is a man that isna feared o' the wrath o' kings—let alane o' Gregory Glendonwyn o' Castle Gower. There is yae bit herd's hoose i' the pairish where ye are welcome—you and yours—aye, even your auld leddy there, that has dootless been used to something far different!"

Letting go the box John Glendonwyn stood up in genuine astonishment.

"But you are not of the Kirk," he cried, "you do not hold with us who have relinquished her communion?"

"And what o' that?" said Anton the Cameronian herd. 'To the Jews ye maun come!' quoth Peter.

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'Deil a fit!' cried Paal. 'Circumcise!' said Peter. 'Come on!' cried Paal. And withstood him to his face, the furious wee ettercap that he was, him wi' the lame leg, and the thorn in the flesh! Sae let it be wi' you and me, minister! 'Coavenants or nocht!' says I. 'Speeritual Independance!' says you. 'Render unto Cæsar!' says you. 'Plague the doit!' says I. 'Have at ye!' says you, wi' your neives up. And at maist times I wad be willin'!—But consider gin Paal cam' to Jerusalem and thae deil's birkies o' temple officers were hard at his tail, wadna Peter tak' him to yon door he kens sae weel, an' let him into the secret o' the knock that brings out the young lass sae blithe and ready? Wad he no slip him in unkenned, think ye? And gin Peter cam' to Damascus, wad Paal no gie him a lend o' his basket, for a' the bit difference that had been between them——?"

"That wad he no," cried Babby Lockhart, suddenly interrupting, "and I wull tell ye for why. The basket wad hae been broken doon, hoop, rib, and wattle by the wecht o' the leebrary Paal wad hae been haulin' up and doon in't. Nae sauch wands that ever were grown by Abana and Pharpar, rivers o' Damascus, wad hae stood the strain for an hour!"

"So," said the herd, disregarding her indignation, "this is the message frae my maister that I hae gotten—no frae Maister Habbleshaw o' Bennangour but frae a Higher Han'!—'Gang doon, as the Lord has prospered you,' said the Voice to me late yestreen, 'an' offer to the minister the shelter o' your bit hoose.' It's no muckle, Maister Glendonwyn, but oh, ye are welcome as the first green grass on the hills o' snaw to the hungry yowes. Come your ways up, man. There's grund caller air on Bennangour, a bit burnie to wash yoursel' in, wi' pools that wad droon ye were ye as big as Samson and his muckle kirn. And there's heaps o' mutton hams, and guid rough-ground oatmeal for

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Babby to bake into cakes. And there's the 'ben-room' for you, and your buiks and your studyin'—the heather growin' bonny up to the verra windows, and the larks tellin' ye a' the day lang hoo to praise God wi' the upspringin' heart. Forbye, there's mair nor that. There's a' the side o' Bennangour for ye to walk on wi' your Maker! And even Enoch himsel' couldna hae wanted mair nor that. Oft hae I been transported—me that am but an ignorant unlearnt man, walkin' there aneath the lift, wi' naething but the viewless winds atween me and the seeventh heavens. Come your ways up wi' me, laddie. Ye ken auld Anton that has wished ye weel a' your days. What he means, he says. And what he says, he means!"

John clasped the hand held out and the water stood salt in his eyes.

"But," he said, slowly and thoughtfully, "will not your master turn you away? Bennangour belongs to my father, and you know what he has threatened! Why should you meddle in a quarrel which is not your own?"

The old man threw back his head with the gesture of a Covenanter before the Star Chamber.

"True it is," he said, "that Abram Habbleshaw o' Bennangour micht cast off the servant that has served him and his father—and saxty years o' yowes and lambs at the biddin' o' Gregory Glendonwyn. But I judge no. And for this reason. Abram Habbleshaw, great billyin' cuif as he is, is nae bond servant to ony man. His faither afore him was a rich man—and what he had, Abram, bein' blessed wi' the gettin' grippy hand, has mair nor doobled. He has led farms by the score an' as far as it may be said o' ony mortal without offence, the cattle on a thoosand hills are his. Gin Gregory Glendonwyn, your faither, were to threaten to pit him oot o' Bennangower, it is odds that he wad answer him as he did Neilson o' Clatterinshaws.

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'Sir,' says he to Neilson, 'I will mak' you an offer to tak' your hale estates at valuation!' Bigger odds still that he wad juist haud at him, wi' a golly o' muckle braid oaths as coorse as a' Kilmarnock. Therefore dinna think o' that! Gin ae door shuts, anither will open for Anton. He is a lanely man, and hae gotten a guid wage for near on saxty year. Auld Anton will no want, though he never lifted a penny fee mair in this world! But up yonder stands his bit hoosie—and prood will his faither's son be to welcome ye there, till siccan time as the fowk draw aboot ye, and ye hae a bonnier manse biggit than the yin ye are leavin' for conscience sake."

"I thank you, Anton," said John Glendonwyn, touched to the heart, "you are to me this night even as Aaron and Hur for the upholding of my hands."

The old Cameronian herd looked up quickly.

"Ye will make nae mistak', will ye, sir—will ye?" he said a little anxiously. "I and all I have are yours, as gin ye were son to me that son has nane. But when it comes to the Sabbath morn I wull gang doon the brae and hie me ower the lang muir and up by the Cross Roads to the Kirk o' the Coavenants at Causeyend. Accordin' to the flesh, I dinna like Maister Osbourne as weel as you. But ye see, him and me 'grees aboot the Coavenants and the Paying o' the Cess an' the Ceevil Magistrate and things like that—things that ye care nae mair aboot than ye do whether my collie Tyke has a rough coat or a sleekit yin. But whilk are as the breath o' life to auld Anton that was bred to That Way even frae his youth up."

"With that, or with anything that concerns the conscience, I think you will not find me meddle," said John Glendonwyn. "But the fear in my heart is rather that there will be but few in the parish who see as I do, or who will desire that I should continue among them."

The old man took a quick look over his shoulder to

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see if Babby were still in the room. But she had disappeared to finish her own preparations, having now the prospect of a better "doonsittin'" (as she called it) than in "toon lodgings"—where all she would have to do would just be to see that the landlady did not cheat her laddie, or allow the cat access to his butter behind his back.

Happy landlady, sound ought to be your sleep in the town of Kilgour this night, considering what you have escaped!

"Maybe there's mair wi' ye than ye wad think, sir," he said, comfortingly, "like a' things it juist needs a beginnin'. And noo that ye are to hae an abidin' place in the pairish itsel' (sic as it is), there's mony the yin will stand by ye in the Quarry-hole on Sabbath mornin'. Fear ye never that. The Lord shall raise up a folk for Himsel', and the auld seed o' the Coavenant and the moss hags shall be sown amang ither Kirks also!"

It was in this way and with these advertisements of welcome that John Glendonwyn went to bide in the herd's house of Anton McMillan, the Cameronian shepherd of Bennangour. And on the following Sabbath day, judge ye with what strange feelings John Glendonwyn arose, and donning his clothes hastily upon him, went out to meditate upon the side of the mountain.

It was still early. The mists went slowly trailing up the great swelling buttresses of the hills, dipping into brackeney corries and bridging with dim white arches the chasms from which came the roar of many waters, as the Black burn threw itself down the linn (in which of old the Hill Folk had oft sequestered themselves).

Far beneath John looked down upon the green fields, the springing cornlands of the valley with the broad Gower Water running through them, and there—on a little eminence, the Kirk of Gower with the white tombs

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of the dead about it. Farm and cothouse and farm steading lay in that marvellous unbroken Sabbath quiet. The peculiar brooding silence, the hush and awe of that day affected John Glendonwyn keenly. His was the only foot, save those of the black-faced sheep, which that day had trod the great solitudes his eye wandered over, or scattered the morning dew upon these purpling ridges.

So thought John Glendonwyn, but he was wrong. There were two (and perhaps three) already astir and already in the ancient Scots phrase, "compassing the throne of grace" for him. He had not gone far from the house when the sound of a voice speaking in the profound silence stayed and held him. It issued forth of a great bush of heather and broom, as from an oratory. The minister of Gower—to-day the minister of Gower no more, stole up and listened. It was the Cameronian elder who was speaking.

"Thou with Whom is all wisdom and direction," he was saying, "grant to the young man this day that he may speak Thy word, without fear, in all simplicity, and in the love of it. Be a mouth unto him and wisdom—and raise up about him an hearing people in this parish of Gower that needs siclike sairly——"

John stepped back. The Cameronian was pleading for him, but he had no right to listen to the words. They were not addressed to his ear. Yet as he wended his way up the little brown trickles of sheep walks, and brushed the dew from the bracken-bourochs, he felt somehow infinitely refreshed and strengthened.

"The prayer of a righteous man availeth much,"—so ran his meditation. And how much more would he have been aided, had he known that down on the edges of the woods opposite Kilgour, near that shining white speck to which his eyes turned so often, still apparently smokeless and lifeless in the morning sun, there was a girl who had also slipped out of a shut

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and darkened house to breathe the morning air, to watch, and to pray.

And if the words of her simple supplication had not the weight and dignity of those of the Cameronian elder, they were feathered and ~~and~~ ^{designed} to carry just as true and far. The impulse of her anxious heart propelled them:

"God bless John to-day. I wish I were with him. Please make him feel that I am thinking of him."

And Fairlie Glendinning, who had prayed these words almost unconsciously, looked lingeringly up at the side of Bennangour. For she had news of John's removal thither, and with her face still in that direction, she pulled a white rose from the little tree by her bower, and first kissing it, she threw it as far as she could over the tall beech hedge in the direction of the herd's house among the heather of the hillside.

Also at the window of a certain room in a square, douce, white-walled manse on the opposite side of the river there was standing a tall, white-robed figure. The window was open and sweet airs were stealing in across the water smelling clean off the great wastes of heather. There was a whaup flying over the town uttering his wild cry. But so early was it that there is no noise in the Sabbath-quiet of the streets to scare him back to his airy domicile. Veronica Cæsar glanced round. Two of her sisters and a little brother were asleep in the same room. She looked out again, sighed, shook her head, and murmuring, "No—no—I know it can never be!" she turned and went quietly about the house, laying aside the worn week-day clothes, and looking out those which were donned fresh and fresh every Sabbath morning—the uniform in fact, of the Cæsarian legionaries.

Then she smiled, though somehow her eyes were dewy.

"This is what I was meant for, evidently!" she

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said, the soft wet light still in her eyes, and brushed harder at the bottoms of Henry's trousers, which bore the stains of muddy ways and careless feet.

Which in its way was a prayer every bit as good as either of the other two. For if self-sacrifice be not the matter and essence of prayer, it is one of the strong pinions that lift it heavenward.

XXXIII

NEC TAMEN CONSUMEBATUR

THAT was a strange Sabbath day in Scotland when in four hundred and seventy pulpits there was either silence and emptiness, or the voice of a stranger—nothing like it since the “Drucken” Parliament of the Restored Charles stilled the kirk services over all the South and West, and set the heather on fire with those field-preachings which in time were to bring down the mighty from their seats.

The Disruption was accomplished. The ministers had done their part—would the people follow them or like the kirk jackdaws,—“bide by the waa’s?” It was a day of testing.

Breakfast at the Herd’s House of Bennangour was a very silent meal that morning. John Glendonwyn was thinking of his first service as a minister outside the Kirk of Scotland. The Cameronian elder, having done the thing which alone was in his power to do, was silent out of sympathy—a very fine gentleman this herd of Bennangour.

At last the hour-hand of the tall eight-day clock approached eleven, and it would take the better part of an hour to reach the Quarry Hole in front of the village of Gower where the first service was to be held. The Cameronian and the self-outed minister walked together still and silent until they reached the little stile where the road down to the Quarry separated from the track which wimpled through the heather towards the town of Kilgour.

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There John and the Elder shook hands and looked a moment in each others' eyes—the look which meant, “God speed! Go thy way—a good way, though not mine!”

For it is after this fashion men differ with good and commendable differences about religion throughout Scotland. Men do not differ about that to which they are indifferent. Therefore let the Blue Banner wave, and the Bush burn yet unconsumed, and Saint Andrew with his crozier be set on high, and half-a-dozen steeples be seen mounting from every village athwart the land! Let men argue and brother turn his back upon brother on the Sabbath morn, each travelling to his own particular Zion to hear the living Gospel according to his desire and conscience. If the hives are healthy, let there be more and more. Good and not evil has come to the Kirk of Scotland through her diversions. Adversity, and not prosperity, hath made her great. High Kirk, Low Kirk, Middling Kirk, Broad Kirk, Psalm Kirk, Hymn Kirk, and even Laodicean Paraphrase Kirk—let them emulate each other to good works and stimulate one another to the best and least somnolent purpose. What a dull fusionless place this Scotland would be without her religious rivalries and emulations!

It was a striking sight which greeted John that glorious June day high-arched and resplendent of sun. From every side the people poured in, all making for the village—only a slender sprinkling of utter bondmen to Gregory Glendonwyn, and a few staunch pillars of Kirk-and-State to be seen taking a contrary trickle in the direction of the steepled knowe beside the empty manse.

“They are come out to see what shall be done,” said John, “so much is well. But it will not last? It cannot last!”

Nevertheless for that day his heart was sufficiently

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elate within him. For he thought "At least I am not wholly alone in this the hour of my trial."

The brief entry underneath is taken from the diary of one who was present upon the occasion, and shows the effect produced by the young minister's first appearance as a field preacher:

"I went to the Old Quarry Hole (the diary goes on) and found there a strange thing. Many of the country lads and cotters from the farms had been cutting out and arranging seats during the week, some on the bare rock, some on quarry stones excavated but abandoned and still more on an amphitheatre of turf in front of which the preaching box had been set up.

"There were, so far as I could see, near on to six hundred persons present, some doubtless drawn by curiosity from Kilgour and other neighbouring parishes, but most of them tenants and cottiers on the Gower estates, for whom it said no little that they should be present on an occasion which they knew might affect their livelihood.

"At last the young minister, Mr. John Glendonwyn, was seen approaching over the hill from the shepherd's cottage where he was lodging—the only place which could be found for him in the parish. He looked tall and slim. blue of eye and pale of face—more like a student than one, who, after being a placed minister of the Kirk of Scotland in one of her best parishes, had made himself separate from his own kith and kin, and damaged his worldly prospects—so far at least, as these were in the power of his father to hurt or to help.

"The first psalm had just been given out, and while the people were singing, I saw a great many people turn round, and some few put up their plaids and pull their shawls about their heads as if they did not wish to be recognised. But the elders and those who had

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taken a prominent part with the young minister, stood boldly bareheaded beside him, singing to the tune 'French' the psalm which begins, 'I to the hills will lift my eyes, From whence doth come mine aid. Presently I heard a carriage drive up and stop. Then as soon as the singing of the psalm was over, I saw Mr. Glendonwyn pushing a way through the throng, which made way for him readily. There was a little broad-bodied lawyer-looking man with him, but it was Mr. Glendonwyn who appeared most keen upon the business.

" 'By what right do you hold a conventicle in this place?' he called out in a loud voice as he came near the preaching box.

" Then the young minister looked calmly down, and answered with a sufficient quiet that won the respect of all, ' Sir, we are advised that the place is public. It has not been fenced for forty years, nor have the quarry stones been worked within the memory of man. We believe that we have a right to worship here according to our consciences.'

" ' Then you believe a lie, which will be nothing new to you!' cried Mr. Glendonwyn, lifting his hand threateningly, as if he would have smitten his son to the ground ' but we will soon show you. My friend here has an interdict from the Court of Session which will settle that matter.'

" ' Sir,' said the minister, gravely, ' this is the Lord's day morning, and no time for the service of any legal document. To-morrow I and my office-bearers will hold ourselves at the gentleman's service.'

" Then he lifted up his hands and said, very reverently, ' Let us pray.'

" At which Mr. Glendonwyn turned and stamped his way back through the concourse in a very great and high anger, declaring in the hearing of all that he would cast his son off for ever, and that he would live

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to repent that day's work—with other speeches which I need not set down here.

"Mr. John's sermon that day was on the text, 'The Lord hath done great things for us, of which we are glad.' And he spoke with much fervour of the Reformation of John Knox, of the Intrusion of Bishops, of the High Days of Presbytery, of the twenty-five years' Persecution, and of the long deadness of prosperity which followed the Revolution.—Thereafter he condescended upon the new life and hope which had stimulated the Church, the demand for more liberty, and the hopes which had been so often disappointed. I cannot mind all he said, but at the last when near his concluding he had this enlargement of the spirit. Speaking of the sacrifices which might yet be required, he said, 'There are many things against us—many strong things and many powerful men. But there is one thing which may encourage us—that when we that are on the earth shall depart and the Gate of the Eternal looms before us—though the portals be high as the heavens, we shall find the gate itself by which we must enter, small and mean and low, while over its lintels shall be written in letters of gold the words, "As a little child."'

"A word which many took as an answer to the reflections which had been so freely made upon Mr. John, that he should have set himself up to be wiser than Dr. Cæsar, and Mr. Aiblins, and his own father—being as it were a very young man and but a child in the service of the Kirk."

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From this it was evident that there was to be the bitterest enmity (on the father's side at least,) betwixt Gregory and John Glendonwyn. The former had never really been reconciled to his son. He had always

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disliked him, derided him, slighted him—nay even gone out of his way to insult him before the servants, so that all consequence might attach to his favourite. And this, it may be, is one reason why these things turned out so, and why all that now remains of the Coat of Many Colours is the marble tablet in the burying-place of the Glendonwyns which records the virtues of Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn.

Whatever there is of good in Gregory Glendonwyn, shows itself in the inscription which he composed for the monument. His love for his son may indeed have been an infatuation, but its very unselfishness gave it a certain ennobling quality of its own.

It is a pity, however, that a short summary of the character of the deceased from the standpoint of the experience of (say) Miss Fairlie Glendinning could not have been added to the memorial stone, as well as the simple but suggestive fact that, when the body of this paragon among young men was carried to its last resting place, his wife's shawl, by a strange irony, was found lying upon their first trysting seat at the tomb's entrance, whither in her fear and midnight agony of flight she had betaken herself and her babe.

Truly the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. But at the last, after much enduring and much flourishing like whole forests of green bay trees, He-that-Sits-in-Heaven-and-Laugh brings all to a strange equality.

So in his tower of grey stone high over the sea-edge Gregory Glendonwyn sat, eating his heart out with anger for the disappointment of his hopes, and with the open defiance of his surviving son for the last bitter drop in his cup. He had indeed no longer any fear of him. The papers which John had signed so hastily had been sufficient to enable Gregory Glendonwyn to procure the sum requisite for his immediate needs and to cover Rupert's defalcations. It did not matter to him that John should be left absolutely pen-

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nilless. Indeed that rather added the bitter flavour of merited punishment to his paternal meditations upon his son's situation.

His feeling increased in force and acrimony when he heard that the young minister had obtained a site for his church in the village of Gower itself—no other indeed than that house and garden which he, Gregory Glendonwyn, had bestowed upon the faithful Babby Lockhart and her heirs forever in acknowledgment of her care and diligence in rearing this same ungrateful son.

It was Factor Halliday who brought the news to his master, and he had entered expecting to provoke a great outbreak of furious anger. None however, came, which considerably disappointed him. Gregory Glendonwyn sat with a grey set face thinking, and the factor had perforce to slip out with no news to carry, either to the servants' hall or to the higher Vehmgerrecht of the Head Gardener, the Head Gamekeeper, and the Chief Forester of the estates—the vassals and vavassours of the feudality of Gower.

Now to such a pass had this hatred come that the matter of Gregory Glendonwyn's thinking was frightful even to himself.

"No,—" he was repeating over and over to himself, "not if I disown him—not if I am compelled to use against him the last weapon in my power, shall a penny of my money, a penny of my wife's money be spent on defying me, brow-beating me in the face of my own people. I will show him what it is to thwart his father, to join himself with beggarly showmen and political mountebanks. He has given up the stipend of his parish. He can have little from the company of scarecrows and beggars who will dare to favour him in Gower. For the rest—I will keep him from ever getting a penny out of the Gower estates. Like a fool he has signed away his own property and inheritance.

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Verily he might discover the text for a sermon, in the Bible he is so fond of casting in every one's teeth—'The way of a fool is right in his own eyes.' He has chosen his way with those same fool's eyes open. But I will hound him from Gower. I will cast him off as a son. And by heaven and Him who dwells there, I will take even the inheritance he makes so sure of, out of his hand. I can and I will!"

With that Gregory Glendonwyn, being a man of action, rose up at once and proceeded to carry out his threat.

For a great idea had occurred to him, a plan at once so striking and far-reaching, yet so mortifying to his own pride, that only the desperate hatred which he had been cultivating in his heart against his son could have brought him even to consider it.

Now, however, he was resolved. To spite John Glendonwyn, rebellious son, unworthy heir, Gregory Glendonwyn would have lopped off his own right hand. Judge then if he was likely to be slack as to the cutting off from his inheritance this evil seed, this degenerate plant of a strange vine. No, his heart decreed it with revilings all the more bitter because he uttered none of them aloud. His reason concurred with his angry heart. He could do it and he would. By the love he had cherished for his dead eldest son, by the hatred he had for his living younger, he would do it. He, Gregory Glendonwyn, would cut him off from the family succession. His foot should no more tread Gower earth. He should starve for lack of a penny of Gower money and when he died, the very privilege of lying among the Glendonwyns of Gower, should be refused him.

XXXIV

THE SNARL OF THE GREY WOLF

THESE amiable thoughts with regard to his son caused Gregory Glendonwyn to make up his mind to pay a visit of some importance to this history—one to which, however, he himself looked forward with no great anticipations of pleasure. Indeed so little did he desire to make it for its own sake, that he opened his mind that night to a certain Mr. Christopher Ingalls (of Sharp, Smart, and Ingalls, W. S., of Edinburgh), who was staying with him at the castle. Mr. Ingalls had recently made himself exceedingly useful to Mr. Glendonwyn—in fact, ever since Mr. McCrosty had declined to have anything to do with Gregory's irregular and unlawful intromissions with his younger son's maternal inheritance.

Mr. Ingalls it was who obtained and served the interdict shutting the quarry to the newly-formed Free Presbyterian congregation, driving them triumphantly forth to worship on the roadside, where next Sabbath he intended to have half-a-dozen county officers on hand with instructions to keep them moving, so as not to obstruct the traffic. Mr. Ingalls had also gained much favour with his principal by discovering a flaw in the deed by which Mr. Glendonwyn had handed over the cottage and garden to Babby Lockhart. At least the consequent litigation (and Mr. Glendonwyn meant to carry it to the bitter end—to the House of Lords if necessary) would take several years, and, he anticipated, would require more money than a struggling country congregation could afford to spend.

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It was, however, an interview he had with Duncan Grierson, which finally decided him to proceed to extremities with his son, and to take the desperate resolution which he was now, in company with Mr. Ingalls, about to put into execution.

Duncan had come up on the Sabbath morning after breakfast and on his own behalf and on the part of a certain number of the upper servants of the House of Gower, requested an interview with their master.

"What is it, Grierson?" Mr. Glendonwyn cried, looking up testily from his reading. "This is the Sabbath and I have much on my mind to-day."

It was the morning of the service in the Old Quarry Hole.

"So have we, sir, so have we!" said Grierson, and without further preliminary he opened the door and ushered Bannerman the head gardener, Cuthbertson the forester, Mrs. Mair the housekeeper, and two of the upper house-servants into the presence of the master of Castle Gower.

"This is most unseemly and untimely," said Gregory Glendonwyn. "But speak out. Let me hear what you have to say! Have you any complaints to make?"

"Sir," said Duncan Grierson, "being the oldest servant in the Castle as well as on the estates, I am asked to speak for those others who are here. Sir, we have had our disputings in public, our searchings of heart in private with regard to matters of religion, and we have come to ask your permission to attend the services of the Free Presbyterian Kirk of Scotland in this parish, upon such days as we have had heretofore our ordinary liberty of attendance upon ordinances. We do not think that it is a matter which ought to come between master and servant, but we have been long with you—serving you, so far as in us lies, faithfully, and we would not do anything secret or (as it were) underhand with you!"

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Dumb-stricken sat Gregory Glendonwyn. The rebellion had come very near his throne. For a moment he could not answer, because of the furious anger which swelled his heart.

This it was to encourage rebellious sons. The serpent's brood, nourished abroad, soon crept into a man's own house. Then the tempest broke forth in its full frenzy.

That day and hour they should leave his dwelling. They had been suborned by his son—one who rejoiced in stirring up strife, who set the most sacred obligations at defiance, caring for nothing save his own vainglory. He, Gregory Glendonwyn, would pay them their wages and they should go. He would not waste words to tax them with their ingratitude for many years of favours—but go they must and at once. Bag and baggage, hat-box, band-box, basket, scrip and scrippage out, they must trundle, so that the walls of Castle Gower should be rid of such ungrateful vermin.

Then it was that Duncan Grierson bowed himself before his master with the ceremony of an Oriental, mingled with the stern rectitude of the Scot's religionary, and after that, promptly erected himself and looked the Laird of Gower in the face.

"No, Mr. Glendonwyn," he said, "not like stranger dogs will we be driven from the doors we have entered so long. We are all good servants with our characters to look to, and these men have wives and families, which (I thank God), I have not. We will serve you faithfully to the limits of our notices—I myself for a month and the others for six months according to their agreements. During that time we will faithfully abstain from any declaration of our sentiments, and from attendance on ordinances according to the way that our consciences approve——"

"Your conscience, Grierson," sneered his master,

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"of a truth it must have been growing in tenderness during these last days!"

The old man bowed his head.

"I thank God that I have tried to make amends for some of the ill I have done," he said. "You have a right to cast those things which you know up to me, sir. But at least my future shall not copy my past. I have learned so much—among others, from Mr. John——"

"Silence!" shouted Mr. Glendonwyn, "if you name that name in this house I will knock you down,—aye, if you could claim a hundred years' service instead of fifty. And as for the rest of you—I will deal with you to-morrow morning—that is, I and Mr. Ingalls will do so. You shall have liberty—all the liberty you like to exercise every religious duty according to your consciences. But if I get my way you shall have some way to travel, in order to do it. You can go."

Very different was the scene being enacted in the dining-room of the Manse of Kilgour at the hour of morning worship.

"Stay a moment, Mary and Martha," said Dr. Augustus Cæsar, putting up a beautiful white hand encircled with the old-fashioned shirt-cuff of ruffled lace which Veronica always laid out specially for him on Sunday mornings (and saw him put on, too!) "Stay—I have a word to say to you. This day there is a division in Scotland which (as I have reason to know), runs far and deep. There is another religious assemblage to be held in this town as well as the usual divine service in the parish church. Now I do not know whether you have any views on the subject, or if your several families have. But this do I say, if you desire to follow your consciences elsewhere, you are at perfect liberty to do so. The service is, I believe, to be held at noon in the Town Hall, and a very excellent servant of God, Mr. Kinfauns, late of Duchrae

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parish, is to preach. That is all I have to say. Now let us worship God in this our family!"

And who among the mighty, who among the wise, who among the Christians of any denomination, had a better right to worship God than that same stout-hearted old Moderate and Erastian, Dr. Augustus Cæsar of the parish Kirk of Kilgour?

Let it be added that with the Scottish sense of taking what is meant, as it is meant, Mary the cook abode by the family Zion and graced the Doctor's pew in the Parish Kirk with dauntless fortitude, but Martha the nurse carried little Harry Cæsar with her (in the interests, not of schism but of domestic peace) to the Town Hall—and, by doing so, incidentally enlightened the exercises of those in her immediate neighbourhood, having seated herself near Lil' Dzonny Colstoun. For that youth so completely corrupted the son of the manse, that the pair of them sucked sweets all the time, and smelt conjointly and severally like a peppermint factory.

* * * * *

All which things and many others, slight but infinitely galling to a proud and arbitrary man, worked like fire in the veins of Gregory Glendonwyn. He would once for all make an end of his son. As a means to an end he set out, with his new friend and man-of-business Mr. Christopher Ingalls, to call upon David Glendinning and his daughters.

Little was said by the way. Mr. Glendonwyn was full of his intention, and as for Mr. Ingalls, he was engaged in estimating what this new connection would be worth to his firm—enough, he thought, being a pushing fellow, to buy out Sharp and Smart who were both oldish men, and would be content to retire to one of these country estates of a few thousand acres each, of which there were so many just now in the

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market—and especially in the hands of such clever practitioners as Messrs Sharp, Smart and Ingalls, Writers to the Signet.

So in the clear sifted light of a June forenoon, when the clouds were like a semi-globe of ground glass, these two gentlemen walked up to the blue double-leaf of David Glendinning's door, and the taller of them knocked firmly and determinedly thereon with the knob of his cane. It had a gold knob, and was fully as well known in the parish as the owner himself.

The Flower Cot was gay and brilliant as ever with geraniums and slipperwort of strange uncanny shapes, speckled and ring-straked like tropic fruits. The air was delicate with lilac, white and purple, and Fairlie's white roses clambered over all.

"A sweet place," said the lawyer, looking about him—"yours, of course, Mr. Glendonwyn?"

But the master of Gower Castle did not reply to the ill-omened query. He was looking rather anxiously about. He knocked the second time without receiving any answer. Did the Glendinnings mean to deny themselves to him? Or—worst of all for his present purpose, had they carried out his own former commands and gone away.

But no—at the third application of the gold knob to the blistered panel, there came forth from a low neighbouring door, variously streaked in blue and orange and scarlet, a tall man with grey locks of hair straying about his face, which escaped oddly enough from underneath the flat paper cap he wore, and the strangest eyes, looking out from under shaggy brows which were in their turn subject to the strangest twitchings. This gaunt figure, hollow of cheek and with smouldering fire in its eye, moved quickly along till the bony arms and multi-scarred hands, the shoulders slightly stooped and the threatening, militant Calvinistic countenance were interposed between Gregory Glendonwyn

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and the creeper-hung door of the Flower Cot at which he had been knocking.

"You are Mr. David Glendinning?" said Gregory Glendonwyn, lifting his hat politely.

"I am!" replied the now motionless figure with grim brevity, without returning the salutation. The Old Grey Wolf was of a certainty culpably negligent of the lighter courtesies—as it were, the mint, the anise, and the cummin of good manners, though surely well equipped as any in the weightier matters of the law.

"Then, Mr. Glendinning," said his visitor, nowise abashed, "I am come to have an important interview with you——"

"I desire none with you!" quoth David, with a snap of determined jaw, like the Grey Wolf after which he was named, when he grips his teeth upon a thigh bone.

"I trust I shall be able to satisfy you that what I ask is for your good," said Mr. Glendonwyn suavely, "and—I may add, for the benefit of those belonging to you."

"I ken of no possible benefit that I or mine could be glad to receive from you or yours, Gregory Glendonwyn," answered the joiner of Boatcroft, "save that ye should gang oot through that yett and never set foot on my doorstep again."

"But," persisted Mr. Glendonwyn, keeping his temper with difficulty, "it is a matter which concerns not only you but your children and children's children—indeed all who shall come after you!"

A sudden access of fury seized the old man. He lifted a small vicious-headed American axe which was leaning against the side of the wall.

"Gin ye do not tell me by what right ye speak of my children's children," he shouted, "by the Lord that is on High, I will cleave you to the breast-bane!"

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Singularly devoid of courtesy was this grim Old Grey Wolf.

"Concerning that I can satisfy you to the full," replied Gregory Glendonwyn, who on his part certainly did not lack his share of the family courage, for he never blenched at the near gleam of that threatening edge, the anger in those gloomy eyes, or at the swelling muscles of that mighty arm. "Permit me to speak with you apart for half an hour only. This is my legal adviser, Mr. Christopher Ingalls of Edinburgh. He will tell you that the matter I am about to present to you is both urgent and private."

"I have nothing that needs to be held private with you, or with any of your race," said David, "nor shall ye enter my hoose while there is breath o' life in my body. But yonder is the woodshed—if ye choose to pass in, I will not prevent ye."

"I thank you," said Gregory gravely, going on before, Mr. Christopher Ingalls, whose apprenticeship to the law had not included precedents for dealing with interim interdicts in the shape of American axes, following him, not a little bewildered.

"Now, speak your mind and be brief," quoth David. And standing thus, the axe-handle still in his hand and the head gleaming up from a great block of chipped and dinted hard-wood, the old Grey Wolf looked the very type of an executioner waiting to do his office.

"Sir," said the Laird of Gower, whom no display of force could daunt or deflect from his purpose, "I have come to invite my late son's wife and his infant son to take their due positions in my house, and to be acknowledged before all men as their position befits, and as I am willing and anxious to receive them!"

For a moment David Glendinning stood, as it had been, stricken dumb with the surprise of the words. He had been ready to resent insult, and now, so far

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as his house's enemy knew how to do it, honour was thrust upon him and his.

Gregory smiled, well-pleased at the apparent effect of his words. The lawyer, who had taken the ordinary professional view of such cases—which is, "A bad business—make the bad best of it!" considered his client's offer even ludicrously generous. Why mix the woman up in the matter at all? Make the widow a conditional allowance and bring up the child apart from her and her people.

But during his visit to the Island Gregory Glendonwyn had learned better. Kate would not give up the boy. So, to thwart his hated younger son, he would make the sacrifice and accept both mother and son. He had no fear of the Glendinnings' answer.

It was sometime before the Old Grey Wolf spoke. He stood like a statue carved in yellow ivory—all, that is, save the great bushy grey eye-brows, which kept working strangely, like mercury "pumping" before a storm.

And still Gregory Glendonwyn was not warned, though (as it were) an expert would have known that all the four storm-cones were being hoisted at once. Then suddenly it came. The old carpenter of Boat-croft extended his arm like some gaunt semaphore.

"Go," he cried, "there lies your way! Marriage—I ken naught of any marriage. I ken of no daughter of mine that is wife to a son of yours. If I did, I would brain them and their offspring with this axe. I will have no dealings with you or yours. Go—while by God's grace I can yet restrain myself—go!"

"Sir," said Gregory Glendonwyn, "this is not a matter for anger or dispute. It is a matter which concerns right and justice. Your daughter Catherine is my late son's wife. That they were married, admits of no doubt—though once I own I doubted it. I have the names of the witnesses. It is equally certain that

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the child born upon the island was—nay is, the heir to the estates of Gower.”

With a voice more doggedly grave than ever David Glendinning replied.

“I ken nothing of heirs and marriages. I acknowledge none. I scorn you and your name, your lands and your heirships. I would rather that any child of mine should live and die shamed, than that she should bear, even by common repute, the name of a dastard and a coward, a ravisher of daughters from their father’s hearth-stone—a traitor to the woman that trusted him and to the love he professed——!”

Then in anger as fierce as his own uprose Gregory Glendonwyn, and if the affrighted lawyer had not restrained him he would have flown straight at the throat of the libeller of his son.

“Of the dead, nothing but good, you know!” urged the lawyer. “Death bars all indictments! Do not let us lose sight of that most excellent maxim. Forget and forgive, Mr. Glendinning. We will all need it when our time comes.”

The Old Grey Wolf turned him about, as if to face a new and unexpected adversary, but finding only a snarling terrier where he expected a hound of mettle, he returned again upon Gregory Glendonwyn without a word.

“Have you not yet understood?” he said, heavily and grimly. “Neither I nor any belonging to me will accept anything from you, if I can help it—not a crust if we were starving or a grave if we were dead. Have words no meaning for you, Gregory Glendonwyn? There lies your road. Walk in it!”

“Nay, but you shall listen,” said the laird of Gower, equally determined to carry his point, for he too was kin to the Wolf, “it is not a matter that you can either do or undo. A marriage took place—I can prove it. A child was born to that marriage. I

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can prove that also. I will have the matter established by law—your grandson declared the heir of Gower. I will have your daughters called as witnesses. Surgeon Warner——”

“Stop there,” said David Glendinning, taking a pocket-book out of his breast, “do ye see that? It once belonged to your son Rupert. It was given to me, in trust for my daughter Kate, by your other son, John Glendonwyn. Well in this there are some papers of value, and among them, one which will, I think, forever prevent Mr. Surgeon Warner from giving evidence in any court of this kingdom of honest men and honourable professions.”

“So muckle for that,” he said, returning the book to his pocket. Then he stepped to the door.

“*Fairlie!*” he called in a loud sudden voice.

The three men stood silent, two of them looking steadily at the ground, the lawyer gazing at them in a kind of maze. There was a light footstep somewhere above—a voice low and sweet to hear.

“Yes, father—did you want me?”

And Fairlie Glendinning, a little wistful, a little paler as to the clear rose of her cheek, a trifle more lily-white as to her complexion, danced in. Really according to her own intention, her gait was a sedate walk, but so airy was her footstep that even when walking up the aisle in church the girl gave the idea of a light dandelion spray-ball blown along by the breeze. The lawyer stood astonished. He had daughters of his own who clumped along the pavement in the ordinary fashion, but a joiner's daughter in a country cottage—how dared she? Positively it was indecent.

“Fairlie,” said her father, “bring me my box of papers!”

The girl moved away without any inquiry as to why the papers were required. David had his household

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in excellent training. The three men waited till she returned, bringing the little box of japanned tin which held David Glendinning's simple title-deeds.

He opened it with a key which was attached to an old fashioned watch-fob along with pierced cowrie shells and curious coins.

"This is the paper which you confided to me on your return," he said, addressing Fairlie. "I have not opened it."

"And now, Gregory Glendonwyn and you Mr. Lawyer, hearken to me! There was a day when one of you would have given his right hand to destroy this bit paper that I hold in my hand. Mark, I have never read it. But my daughter has informed me of its contents. She has told me how she substituted a copy for the original—which copy was burned in your presence, Gregory Glendonwyn, because ye were then as anxious to deny my daughter as now ye are for your ain purposes eager to own her. Own or disown—'tis all the same to me!—the same to my daughter—the same to her child. See!"

And with his hand still holding the paper with its face to the two men, that they and not he might see it, he tore the certificate of marriage into a thousand pieces. Then stepping to the door, he let the fragments stream from his hand upon the steady-blowing wind, which carried them down the bank, and far out upon the bosom of the broad Gower Water.

"God forgive you, you know not what you may have done!" groaned Gregory Glendonwyn, seeing himself baulked in his revenge in the very moment of triumph.

"There," cried the Old Grey Wolf with a kind of hoarse and hissing triumph in his voice, "there—that is what I and mine think of you and your offers. Rather than that I should by my action see my daughter owned as your son's wife, after the shame and ignominy

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of her leaving my house, I would end all with my own hand. I see well your object. Ye would spite the living son, by means of them the dead son hath done his worst to destroy. But not by my will—not by the help of any within these walls! I declare to you, Gregory Glendonwyn, that earth itself doth not hold the shame we of the house of Glendinning would not wear like a crown of rejoicing, rather than be beholden to you for house or land, food or clothing, honour or name! That is all I have to say. Come, Fairlie!”

And he went in and shut his door in the faces of Gregory Glendonwyn, Lord of Castle Gower, and of Mr. Christopher Ingalls, Writer to the Signet in York Place, Edinburgh.

XXXV

GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT

[Being the Third Narrative written by Mr. John
Glendonwyn.]

THE first months of my new ministry were times of great difficulty and pain to me, so much so that only a constant reference to a Power Higher than myself, and the hope that here on the mountain and there on the plain I might yet do something to build up a city of the Lord in Gower, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, at all enabled me to see that God had not quite cast me off.

After the first days of universal wonderment that a son should continue to preach under his father's anger and interdict, when many came to listen and marvel, there fell a time of stark trial on us all. Every day some were dismissed from the countryside, servants, ploughmen, shepherds—all had to leave the parish where there was now no more place for them, everything being in my father's hand, who of course used his power without stint and without mercy even as he had promised that he would.

Then came the turn of the villagers who held tenancies or leases of short date. Many were to leave at Martinmas. Many more had their warnings to remove at the ensuing May term. I could not but feel that those who came to listen to me, still more those who joined themselves as members of our despised

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communion, were doing so to their own hurt. Often indeed did I remonstrate with them, and bid them first consider the cost. But the answer was ever the same.

"Shall you be the only one to lose houses or lands for the Kingdom's sake? Are the promises to be to you alone? Do not grudge us a little of that cup you yourself have drained to the lees?"

For the story had gone athwart the parish like wild-fire, how that my father was now moving heaven and hell (together with the middle purgatorial state of the Court of Session) to take away my heirship to the estate. And indeed as soon as I heard of the matter and the parish talk of a child born to my brother, I went to Mr. McCrosty and offered to make an affidavit, as to the things which I had knowledge of, including all that Rupert had confided to me the night of his death.

But the old lawyer, smiling softly with that dry Scots legal humour, which at its finest is perhaps the best and kindest in the world, showed me a better way, tempering what he was pleased to call my impatient Quixotry with far-seeing acumen. I need only say now that he has been proven right in every particular.

It *was* for the best, especially for those I loved, that I should let things take their course, and permit my father to work out his own purposes.

But during the following winter our cause in Gower for a while seemed almost hopeless. It was a hard season in our part of the country, with early snow and irregular frosts and thaws about Christmas. Then afterwards in the front of the year, came the bitterest weather of all, culminating about the beginning of February in a snowstorm long memorable in the parish of Gower and along the shores of the Solway.

Yet during all this time open-air services were regularly conducted, notwithstanding that we were

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much harried and driven from place to place. Interdict after interdict was launched against us, my father being more than ever resolved that I should be expelled from the place. More than once it was my desire to resign, urging upon my office-bearers that in all probability they would find the most part of my father's resentment to be on my account, and that he might prove more easy to be entreated on behalf of another minister.

But the reply of my elders showed much of that Scottish dourness which in another way, was also my father's failing—though not, I think, my own.

"Na, Maister John," they said, "it was you that brocht us up oot o' the Land o' Bondage, and ye maun e'en bide and lead us into the Land o' Promise."

At last things had gone so far that we were utterly beaten from all parts and pendicles of the Gower estates, and found no rest for our foot save in a little sand or gravel-pit within the flood-mark of the tide, where we continued to meet all through the winter weather. Yet there was less of suffering than might at first appear inseparable from such privation. It seemed as if the driving salt spray did not drench, nor the hail bite, nor the rain soak, nor the easterly wind blow upon us with so fell consequences as at other times. And many a time, as in the Sabbath noontides we gathered, the psalms of praise went cheerfully and gladly up to the accompaniment of howling winds and roaring waves of the sea. For even in this there was a curious sense of elation, of the manful endurance of that which could not be helped, without whining complaint or boastfulness of speech.

One day in particular I remember we had arranged that the communion service was to be held as early as ten o'clock in the morning, in order that the tide might not be full till after the dismissal of the con-

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gregation. But the morning broke dark with blinding drifts of snow, and if it had been possible I would have stopped the people from coming out that day at all. However, since that could not be, I resolved to shorten the service. When we arrived upon the shore at the quarried Rocks of Dhubarran as our outdoor cathedral was called, the ground up to the edge of the gravel-pit was lying white with snow. Even within that surf-beaten shell of sand and pebbles it had drifted, and lay in wimpled wreaths upon the very banks of shingle which had been roughly arranged for the worshippers to sit on.

But such at that time was the spirit of the people, largely, I think, roused by my father's persecution—for indeed they had taken the matters of religion with sufficient calmness before—that even on this fierce day there was a congregation more than ordinarily numerous.

I preached to the accompaniment of wind and snow, and by the time I was finished it was difficult to distinguish the people from the wreaths of snow on which they sat. Add to this, that, as it was communion day, the elders carried round a "mixed chalice" indeed—for the snow and sleet fell alike on the communicants, on the servers of tables, on the minister, and on the holy bread and wine. While we continued, a strong seawind had all unperceived brought up the tide somewhat earlier than had been anticipated, and the service was not concluded when from my elevated box-platform I could see the waves lashing fiercely on the little bank of gravel which formed the only barrier of our gravel-pit.

I remember that we were just ending the day's solemn exercises, (which had lasted nearly two hours) when my father, driving past to the Established Church of Gower in his carriage, stopped the horses and sat awhile listening grimly to our psalm of

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dismissal as it rose and fell stormily, to the surge and swing of "Kilmarnock."

"The floods, O Lord, have lifted up, they lifted up their voice:

The floods have lifted up their waves, and made a mighty noise

And yet the Lord that is on High is more of might by far

Than noise of many waters is or great sea-billows are."

I have often tried to guess what my father's thoughts must have been as he sat there watching the waves beat, the storm-winds descend and the snow drift upon these hundreds of poor uncomfortable folk as they stood up worshipping God, himself all the while dry and snug in his carriage. Yet, knowing Gregory Glendonwyn as I do, I cannot help thinking that after all he half envied us our driving spray and battling bursts of hail and sleet. It was exactly the sort of thing he would have loved to front unblenching, like a lion that turns and shakes his mane in the face of his enemies.

* * * * *

In the previous narrative which (at the request of the Editor) I contributed to these memorials, I told of Old Duncan Grierson and how he first put me on the track of Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn the night before his death—for which I shall be ever grateful to him, in that I was enabled to catch the last words of him who was my only brother after the flesh, and to learn from his own lips that Kate Glendinning was indeed his wife.

Well, as has been mentioned, Duncan Grierson was one of the first whom Mr. Glendonwyn turned away for adherence to the outgoing section of the Kirk of

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Scotland. I knew nothing of this, however, till late one evening when I was sitting in my little bedroom, which was indeed but a sitting-room study with a camp-bed filed away in the corner.

I had walked over a great deal of the parish that day, carrying out my ordinary congregational visitation—the first I had made under the altered conditions. I was tired, and wishing for I knew not what—something that I was little likely to get at all events—thinking (I doubt not) of Fairlie Glendinning and all her sweetness,—which now to me who had not spoken to her for the better part of a year, seemed more winsomely inaccessible than ever. I was thinking—foolish things, I need not say, but things which come even into a minister's thoughts when they ought to be absent from them—of certain little ways she had that I remembered—ways of looking over her shoulder, of tossing her head back, of tying her hair and swinging her strap of books like a great twelve-year-old school girl, very unbecoming in a teacher, no doubt, but somehow strangely cheering to a lonely man to think upon, as it were between sermons. It had been arranged with old Babby that on the nights when I was busy with my writing, I was to sound on a little Chinese gong which I had had in my student days in Davie Dean's House. Then Babby would set about preparing a kind of well-boiled gruel made with leaves which she called "tea."

Though I was not working this night but only thinking dreamily, I sounded it. I was out of touch with work somehow—"aff the fang," as we say in Galloway—and much disinclined for society, even for the sympathetic dialectics of the Cameronian herd, my good friend and host.

So almost before the obedient metal had ceased to whirr, the door opened noiselessly.

"Tea, if you please, Babby!" I said, without once

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lifting my eyes from the red glow of the fire, my book lying meantime idly on my lap and the flame on the candles blowing a little with the draught of the door.

The door of the little study closed, not, however, with the usual rasping of the latch and mutter of affectionate maxims as to my health, and not injuring myself by over-study (which was Babby's way); nor yet with a bang and the scraping of great triple-soled boots on the mat (which was Anton's), but noiselessly as if it had drifted to upon wings of mountain mist.

It seemed to me, thus musing, that I had not been a minute alone before the door was open again. I thought that Babby had not understood, and I said, somewhat crossly, I admit—but like a boy to his nurse, “It was some tea I wanted, Babby—can't you get me some?”

“*Yes-sir!*” said a voice, familiar to me from boyhood indeed, but very far from being that of my ancient dame Barbara.

I leaped from my seat in great astonishment. And there, immediately at my elbow, in his correct butler's dress, cut-away coat, old indeed but clean and speckless, his white tie, broad almost as the palm of my hand, accurately squared at the angles, stood Duncan Grierson. He had a wooden tray in his hand and a yellowish liquid in a tall tumbler, bountifully fragrant.

“Duncan!” I cried, “what are you doing here?”

“Tea, sir!” he said, in his professional manner. And then relapsing into the familiar, if indeed under any circumstances Duncan Grierson could ever be called familiar, “Ye see, Maister John, I brought up a few lemons that I happened to get haud o'. And I made ye the tea as ye like it when ye are tired, wi' plenty o' leaves, a meenite's boilin' water and the leemon! Drink it doon, Maister John. It will do ye guid. I wadna pushion a rat wi' the stuff that Babby brews!”

“But what are you going to do here?” I cried,

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"you can't stay in this cottage to-night, and it is growing late."

"I am come to wait on ye, Maister John," he said, looking firmly at me. "Ye'll hae heard that I hae lost my place. So hae ye lost yours. Weel, I see nocht for it but that we maun juist haud thegither, you an' me!"

"But I have no need for a butler," I cried, holding out my hand, "I have nothing to pay your wages, my poor Duncan. And besides in this place——"

"I hae gotten a' the wages that ever I shall seek frae the hoose o' Glendonwyn," the old man made answer with dignity. "I drew my last shilling the day I gat my fee and my leave frae the man I hae served faithfully for fifty year. I hae neither kith nor kin abune the mould. I hae but a few years mair to live—though sic as I am, I am strong and hearty, thanks to the Giver o' a Guid. So says I to mysel'—It's nane right that a Glendonwyn should live in a cothouse and be served by a foster-wife, wi' saps and caudle-cups. Besides, he will never hae a clean sark to his back fit to put on. I haena leaved sae lang in the house wi' Babby withoot kennin' that her clear-starchin' is no fit for a tinkler's window-curtain. And so, Maister John, here I am—and wages or no wages, here I am come to bide. I hae near hand twa thousand pound in the Bank, and unless I throw it guinea by guinea into the Solway flood, I kenna what is to become o' it, or what the better I am to be o't. I want nae siller frae ye—na, that's no my difficulty, sir. And in this I want your good word. My stumblin' block an' rock o' offence is juist Babby hersel'."

"Why?" I said, "what is the matter with Babby? Do you and she not agree together?"

He stared at me with a kind of wonder.

"Of course, ye wadna think on it," he said after a pause, "but that silly auld woman considers that ye

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are as muckle hers as if she had twisted ye oot o' a haycoke wi' a thrawrape! And as for agreein' thegither—faith, she is ready to do that, and rayther ower weel for my taste!

"For a' that ye see she doesna like my comin' about ye—na—," he added, thoughtfully, "na—I canna say she's greatly ta'en on wi' it! But I ken hoo to settle her—faith, I'll e'en tell her that I'll think o' mair-ryin' her if she behaves hersel' seemly, and, as yin nicht say, wi' circumspection!"

"And what good will that do, Duncan?" I said. For indeed while he talked I was thinking of other things, and specially what answer I would make to this unexpected proposition.

"Weel, ye see, Maister John," he continued, with the utmost simplicity, "it's this way—Babby has been at me to mairry her for a gye while noo—maybes a maitter o' forty, or five-and-forty year. But I never wad juist say whether I wad or whether I wadna—no to gie her a decided answer, as it were. It's the only way for a weel-lookin' unmarriet man to get ony peace o' his life in a hoosefu' o' weemen folk, juist to play them aff yin against the ither, and never let them commit ye to ocht. And naturally, Babby haein' served langest aboot the place—I had mair aff-puttin' an' contriving to do wi' Babby than wi' a' the rest, and that maybe was a kind o' bond in itsel'—aye, it was a Bond, that's what it was!

"But I'll gang doon noo, and tell her that if she'll be content to divide the wark wi' me, fair an' square (me to be the judge) I'll e'en mairry her as soon as you, Maister John are fairly settled wi' a bit lass o' your ain to look after ye—and though she winna think it, that's only the greatest pit-aff o' a'!

"Have you finished, sir,—may I take the tray?"

In an instant he dropped the broad Scots into which he had gradually drifted, assumed the manner of his

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profession, and stood, the Grierson of fifty-years, perfectly polite and serviceable at my elbow.

Then at last I got time to say a word. I asked him how that I could not accept this service. It was foolish—it was ridiculous. In this plain moorland house, scarce larger than a “but” and a “ben,” that I should be waited on by a white-tied butler—grave, grey, respectable, with a black coat and the manners (in so far as his business was concerned) of an archbishop—yes, doubtless it was laughable to think of. Yet somehow as I looked at the honest fellow standing there so anxious, so affectionate, so careful at once for my digestion and for my good name, the tears leaped into my eyes, and I could hardly speak for the sobs that broke in my throat.

“Maister John—Maister John, what’s wrang? Dinna, Maister John!” he cried, coming and laying a shaking hand on my shoulder. “Here, hae a sook mair o’ the tea an’ leemon. Faith, I’ll pit a drap o’ the ‘Aul Kirk’ intilt, in spite o’ a’ the Desruptions in the world! It will do ye guid. Sic a daftlike business as to suppose that ye are fit to leeve up here wi’ only a doited auld body like Babby to look after ye! Certes it’s juist no to be thocht on!”

By this time I had controlled myself and I now strove once more to say what was in my heart. But again Grierson interrupted.

“I canna bide hearkenin’ till ye the noo,” he said, “I maun e’en gang doon and pit that auld yammerin’ wife oot o’ her meesery. I’ll tell her that I wull consent to marry her—that is, condeetionally.”

Then having succeeded in making me smile, he caught up his gravity of demeanour with the instantaneous smoothness of perfectly oiled machinery and marched to the door as steadily as if he had been leaving the dining-room of Castle Gower on a county night.

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He turned about however before finally quitting the room, as if a sudden thought had struck him.

"At what hour will it please you to dine, sir?" he inquired, exactly as he had done every day to my father ever since I could remember.

"Dine?" I cried, laughing aloud at the absurdity, which I understood to proceed simply from old Duncan's desire to make me forget his kindness, "well, I take my porridge-and-milk usually about half-past-seven, if that is what you call dining!"

"Thank you, sir," said Grierson, bowing gravely.

And that night I dined upon roast duck, new potatoes, a salad and a pudding at half-past-seven to the minute, all done to a turn! And Babby in person carried the dishes to the door, while the Cameronian Elder sat in the kitchen with his mouth open, his hands upon his knees and his head bent forward speechless with astonishment.

At the close, after I had partaken of a cup of excellent coffee, Grierson entered holding a smiling and almost a blushing Babby by the hand—a transformed Babby indeed, the like of whom I had never seen before—a Babby who looked at least twenty years younger than when she had scolded me that morning for making holes in my socks by twiddling my right great toe in my roomiest slipper.

"Mr. John," he said, "Babby an' me wish you to know that we are engaged to be married—the ceremony to take place (by mutual agreement), only at such time as we have gotten you, Mr. John, aff our hands, and have leisure to attend to other bit trifles!"

XXXVI

THE MANY DAYS OF DARKNESS

[Being Fairlie Glendinning's Last Narrative.]

IT was a terrible time for us all at the Flower-Cot—that winter and summer after our home-coming from Isle Jonet. I wish I could escape the telling of it, but since I cannot, I will e'en do it as briefly as possible.

My father's humour out of the house became so fierce that he never went to market but I trembled at his going and watched for his homecoming, lest he should have done a hurt to some one. And as for the boys—Will, Harry, and Dick, they flung themselves at all and sundry with such a fury of bitterness that grown men would get off the street into inn-doors and entries if they only saw them coming.

I knew that could not go on. For one thing it was killing me, I felt, and I saw it was killing my father. Only Kate smiled, happy in her youngling—Babe Rupert, as she always loved to call him. But it was long, long before I could bear to hear the name. I got used to it in time, however, and ere long minded it not at all.

But just the same, Kate was never in the least like my own sister again. I think I never saw two persons so different as the old Kate, with her off-hand treatment of suitors rich and suitors poor—carding, spinning, baking, brewing, always doing something here and there in the house, with a gay toss of the head and a blithesome word alike for every one who came near

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her. And the Kate who, having met her fate, found her way home to us from Isle Jonet with her babe upon her arm.

During these days she always seemed to me like some frail, fair bird of rare plumage which has received a mortal wound and mourns over it in secret. She was, if anything, more beautiful than ever. Her face had a rarer distinction and simplicity. She seemed to see through pretences and to reach the Truth without an effort, which we poor mortals strain after all our lives and do not attain.

But yet in some ways God was exceedingly merciful to our stricken dove. It was but rarely, however, that she could be persuaded to go out, though my father with his own hands enlarged the little window of the passage at the back, so that it opened like a door, and by a pair of steps let us out into the garden without the need of passing the front of the house. Now it chanced that one morning very early Kate slipped out quite silently by herself, and when I waked and looked over at her bed, lo! she was gone. But Babe Rupert was safe in his cot, sleeping like a blonde cherub—our Graven Image, I called him—he was so good, and certainly better worth worshipping than any old idol. Never a better mother's blessing—child, boy, or man!

So from that alone, I knew Kate could not be very far away. And indeed it was not very long till she came back. And oh, what a change there was on her face! She had been dreadfully sad the night before—had sobbed herself to sleep, indeed, and even after she was sound, lying awake, I could hear the little click and catch of the grief working in her bosom, only too utterly weary to be conscious of her sorrow any longer.

But now she came in swiftly with a bright face and an alert eye. She ran to me and held me in her arms. "Oh, you wicked, wicked Fairlie!" she palpitated

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breathless. "Why did you not tell me? Were you afraid to tell me? Oh, I have been so miserable—about Rupert! And all for nothing—all for nothing!"

"Tell you what, Kate darling?" I gasped. For I could not imagine what had befallen the girl.

"Why—that Rupert my husband is *dead*!" she cried. "That is why I am glad. Do you not see? I thought that he never came to see me, because he did not love me any more. But it is not that, thank God—thank God! I can pray again now. He would come if he could—only he cannot. He is dead. Now I can think about him again and understand."

"Kate—Kate," I said sadly, "who has told you this?"

"Ah," she cried, clapping her hands as at some joyous tidings, "you never could guess—no, not if I gave you a hundred guesses. Try just once! Try!"

And because I thought it might divert her mind, I guessed that she had met old Mr. Glendonwyn.

But she cast up her head and said, "Do you think I would have spoken to the man who tried to take my husband away from me——? No, nor yet believed him had he told me so a hundred times over!"

After that she grew more thoughtful and looked over at Babe Rupert where he still lay asleep in his cot, busily sucking at his thumb, after his kind.

"And yet in a way you have guessed right," she said, "though I have not set eyes on Mr. Glendonwyn, yet he it was who told me. But I will not tease you any longer—dear, dearest Fairlie! I have got my husband back again into my heart and I care for nothing and nobody. I mean I would have everyone as happy to-day as I am myself."

"But who told you, Kate?" I asked, for I saw her look with desire over at the cot, and I knew that if she began to play with Babe Rupert, she might not tell me at all.

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"Well, I will tell you," she said, "it happened like this. I went over quickly into the wood at the foot of our garden, and kept along the thickest part till I came opposite the old burying ground of the Glendonwyns. Rupert used to say, laughing, when we met there, oh, so long ago, that whether he ever lived to heir the estate or not, he would always be sure of six foot of ground there at any rate.

"And, do you know, the old path through the plantation, the one by which I used to go to meet Rupert at our trysting place is almost grown up. I could hardly find it till after I had crossed the road. But over the field where we used to walk together arm in arm, on the path where no one could see us—you should try that with John sometimes, Fairlie (by the way, why does John never come to see you now, Fairlie—? Is he dead too?) Well, at any rate I got to the stone seat within the porch where we two used to sit down so often—you remember there is a big black Irish yew on one side and a thornbush on the other with knots of flowers in May, and no thorns—think Fairlie, no thorns—not a single one though it stood at the gate of death! And when I got there the great door was ajar. I had never seen it like that before, though often and often I had asked Rupert to bring the key and let me look within. But he would not, for he said then we would be treading on our own graves.

"But now it was open, and there were mason's tools about and a great pile of lime and sand behind the door. So I went in, and do you know what they had been doing—putting up a monument of white marble inside, so pretty! And I thought—who can it be? Perhaps to Rupert's mother, who had been dead so many years. And I wondered if old Gregory loved her as Rupert loved me. And then I began to cry because Rupert did not come to see me any more.—For

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I wanted so to tell him that I was sorry about being cross to him, that last time when he wanted to take away Babe Rupert. Of course he wanted to take Babe Rupert. So would I—if I had to be away from him so long at a time. No wonder that he wished to have the darling beside him. But I was bad and cross on Inch Jonet. Well, I wanted to tell him all this, and he would never come to see me, nor yet write me as much as a line. And his letters used to be so dear—so dear. I have a pile of them. But Fairlie, I shall not tell you where, for then you would take them away and burn them. Oh, I know you, Fairlie! You never liked my Rupert!

“Well, the tablet had not been put up in its place. It was lying in a kind of wooden case or frame, like a picture—I think it had come that way from the man who cut it. And oh, it was so beautiful, with an angel’s head on it and such a touching inscription—it brought the tears to my eyes. Then I read the name:

‘RUPERT GLENDONWYN.’

“And I thought ‘How strange it is that another of the same name as my husband should be buried here, and I not told of it!’

“But when I read on, even before I came to the date, I knew that it could only be my dear husband, and that he was dead. For it was all so like him, every word as I would have written it myself:

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“ UNDER THIS SPOT OF EARTH
IS INTERRED THE BODY OF
RUPERT GLENDONWYN
SON OF GREGORY GLENDONWYN OF CASTLE GOWER,
AGED 31 YEARS.

HE WAS A YOUTH OF THE GREATEST PARTS AND
PROMISE, OF WIDE CULTURE, WISDOM, AND
TRAVEL, OF THE MOST NOBLE SPIRIT AND
MANHOOD, COURAGEOUS AND FULL OF ALL CHRISTIAN
GRACES.

HE IS SURVIVED BY A
BROKEN-HEARTED FATHER, WHO DEDICATES
THIS STONE
TO HIS MEMORY.

“ Oh, I have it all by heart,” Kate broke off suddenly after reciting the words of the inscription with her eyes raised to heaven. “ And then I knew why they had put the head of an angel at the top of the stone. For though I had never seen him with just that expression, I thought that the medallion would look the very image of my Rupert in Heaven ! ”

And after this event there came about so great a change in Kate, that all her actions were different. Whereas before she would not move from the cot-side of Babe Rupert, now she began to go here and there about the house, and even, though in a listless tired way, to attempt some few of her old domestic duties.

Notably also she began to read her Bible again and to pray. And when I asked her why, she did not answer for a while; but afterwards she said simply that it was in order that she might be more fit to meet Rupert in the Other World.

Which answer at the first sickened me. But afterwards, when I reflected on her words, it appeared to

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me one of the best of the virtues of human nature, and in especial of the nature of women, that after death all the faults and failings of a beloved object become clothed in an aureole of misty glory, faults themselves grow causes of endearment, and even sins appear but as spots on the sun.

During all this time I had not once mentioned John Glendonwyn to my father. He had bidden me not think of him any more. But that neither he nor I could effect. Yet as for me, I did what I could. But though shut up apart, I heard all that went on in the Kirk and parish from my brother Will, who had grown (as our Scottish lads do at such times), wonderfully wise and kind, during these days of pain and separation.

I knew, I say, that which was done in the parish and all John's trials and persecutions from his father—also how he had been refused a site whereon to build his church. Much of course I did not know, because John had said nothing about it publicly—the money that his father was keeping up, and the wicked papers he had got him to sign. Nevertheless my heart was sore and wae enough for him, knowing how noble he was at heart. and how he always thought twice for other people before he thought once for himself. I always knew he would turn out like that, whatever Veronica Cæsar said.

But all the while never a word spake my father of good or evil.

That is, till one day in the first of the ensuing summer, he came himself out to me where I sat in the arbour reading. For I read much in those days—books which I thought John would like me to study and which would interest him to talk about. My father had a little sheaf of papers in his hand, and he sat down beside me with a very grave abstracted countenance.

"Fairlie," he said, "you are fretting, bairn—tell

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me, is it that you love any one after the manner of a maid?"

"Yes!" the answer leaped out before I thought—more like a sob you cannot control than a spoken word. (For of course I had no right to speak so, never having been made love to, but only, as it were, assisted in unrolling maps.)

My father sighed, but he did not ask any further questions. He knew well enough all he wanted from that one word—and more.

"Fairlie," he went on, "I want these documents put in the hands of Mr. John Glendonwyn. I cannot go to see him myself. My oath does not make that possible. But I am a just enough man to see that he had nothing to do with this our sore tribulation. Also he is being persecuted by the same ill-hearted father who has brought these things upon us. I am going to leave the neighbourhood. I have had it on my mind to do so ever since Kate's homecoming. Only I delayed for her sake, fearing the effect upon her mind. But now when she is in such an altered case about her husband—why, I think the sooner we go the better. Now I had thought to sell the house and land for what they would fetch. Gregory Glendonwyn or his lawyer would certainly give a great price. They have long been an eyesore to him in the midst of his acreages. But I have seen a better way. It has been revealed to me.

"I am an old man. I have spent but little money all my days, save on your learning, Fairlie. There will be enough for Kate and you. The boys are better without any. Let them work with their hands as their father did, or with their heads if Heaven grant them wit and the proper garnish of brains therein."

I felt my breath come suddenly heavy as if the air gave no life to my lungs.

For it is a different thing to be in the same parish with—one who has helped you to unroll maps, even

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if you do not see him often, than to be far away among strangers. But I had made my choice, and so said nothing to shake my father's resolution, which indeed I knew well that I could not have done in any case.

Then he tapped my knee lightly with the papers in his hand.

"I want you to take these documents to John Glendonwyn (I noted that he left out the Mr. this time). I will tell you what they are. I have effected the transference of all my property here—that is, of the house and land—it is just five acres in all—to him in trust for his congregation. There is an excellent site for the kirk they are anxious to build, at a place which I have designated upon the plan, at the great bend of the Water with immediate access from the main road and a view of the river. Also Gregory Glendonwyn will see it from nearly every window in his castle, which (in my view) adds greatly to its eligibility as a site——"

"Oh, father," I cried, throwing myself on his neck, "you are so good and kind! You have forgiven John."

He smiled a curious smile—a smile with a kind of sick pallor in it.

"There is two things for which I can never forgive him," he said.

"And what is that?" I cried, "I am sure—sure that he is innocent!"

"Nay, he is guilty," said my father, sternly. "He was born his father's son. He cannot clear himself of that. And the other is that he has stolen away your heart from me!"

But he said it in such a way that I made sure in my inmost thought, that, though he could not give in, he was by no means so angry with John as he made out. Which partly excuses what comes after—or at least explains it.

XXXVII

A LION IN THE PATH

I TOOK all that night to think how I should convey the papers to John. Indeed the problem required a great deal of thought. It seemed impossible that I should go to the Herd's House at Benangour—that is, alone. And yet—I knew not how else to obey my father. I thought of Veronica, but somehow it did not seem as if I would like to have her. For she had called once since our homecoming and Rupert's death, but of course without seeing me. And then everybody said that she was going to marry John. No, she was very kind, and I loved her very much, but—I could not ask Veronica.

Then a thought came to me and I laughed—yes, for the first time for many months, at least, as it seemed to me, I laughed aloud. I declare the sound quite startled me. It seemed to take me back into another state of existence altogether—an earlier life, when even as a child I played in the sunshine with pebbles and dolls and gauds. Life seemed to have grown so terribly real of late. But yet as the thought came to me, I laughed. I would go to Bennangour, but—I *would take Little Johnny with me!*

And as soon as I thought of it, I sat down and wrote to Mrs. Colstoun asking her to let Johnny come out to me for two or three days. I told her we were going away. (She already knew much of our troubles by letter—it was my only comfort—and she read them to her husband and John called on Mr. Col-

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stoun always the day after I had written. Because you know, I had promised to hold no communication with John without my father knowing.) So I told her we were going quite away and it would be a comfort to me to have Johnny for a little, first. And I promised to hear him his lessons and to see that he did not eat too many gooseberries out of the garden.

And Mrs. Colstoun was so good and kind that she brought him out herself, and sat in the garden with me and talked a long time. For of course I could not ask her into the house, because of Kate. Though if my father had let Kate please herself about seeing people, I do think it would perhaps have been better. But he could not bear to hear her talking all the time about Mr. Rupert and saying how good a husband he had been to her. So Kate sat within and stitched at the old black dress she had had made when our own mother died seven years ago. She was so thin that it fitted her quite well, though a little short in the skirt. But I showed her how to make it over, and she worked at it most of her time—often, however, having to undo what she had done. For sometimes she would start with monstrous parade of accoutrement to put the gathers into the belt, but alas! with the right and wrong sides of the cloth joined together, and at the seam's foot, a piteous droop telling of unmatched breadths and absent mind.

So it was easy enough for me to leave my father or Will within call of her. She would not miss me, and anything that she did wrong I could set right in the morning, or, what was most probable, have to do it all over again myself. Our poor darling would never know the difference.

It was quite delightful to have Little Johnny again. He was, if anything, fonder of me than ever; and scampered all over the woodyard and joiner's shop, and cut his fingers on the tools, and was lost in the gooseberry

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garden, and fell off a tree, and did so many things all in one evening that I was afraid that he would never last till I had need of him—about going up to Bennangour, I mean.

But nothing seemed to matter long to Johnny. While still weeping streakily from the last fall off the cherry tree, he was already engaged in testing the capabilities of green crab-apples as an evening digestive. With the last of these still in his hand he engaged in a fencing match with a stranger boy over the front wall, using my father's favourite straight-edge as a weapon. He was then despatched to look for hens' nests, of which he found more in one hour than Will and Harry and Dick (strictly perfunctory searchers) had ever done in a week and then tumbled with the whole treasure down a ladder. He seemed all one great yolk when he was brought in to be scraped and comforted, and the house smelled of benzine and spirits-of-wine for a week afterwards. All the same it was cheerful having him about. Even my father owned that.

As for Kate, she did not seem clearly to understand. Sometimes she talked to Johnny as if he were her own Babe Rupert grown up, and then again she would stand over the cot, and look so puzzled, saying, "This is my real baby—isn't it? I fear I have been talking nonsense!"

So the next afternoon—it was June and warm—I went away up the burnside towards the Herd's House of Bennangour, Little Johnny sporting about me like a frolicksome puppy that worries its teeth on branches and bits of stick. I knew that I was likely to find the minister at home. For Will had seen old Anton on the way down to the post-office, and he told him that the minister had been out all the morning seeing some sick people over in the village, but would be home for what that Auld Duncan called 'lunch'—

"a daftlike word for your denner," the Cameronian elder opined.

I had the papers about Boatcroft in a little leather portfolio in which I used to carry the children's exercises to the Academy of Kilgour. And when I got near the house, which shone out white and bonny on a little knoll, with the garden beneath it and the burn roaring through the Bennan Linn fifty yards to the west, I saw old Babby, John's nurse, coming to meet me—as it were, in a great hurry.

So I called Johnny to come and take my hand and then in a minute there was Babby standing in front of me as if to block the way to the house. At another time I would have laughed. But then I only said with dignity, "I wish to see Mr. John Glendonwyn. Is he at home?"

"It's no his hour for seein' fowk—this," she retorted with some acrimony, "na, certes! I wad like to ken whaur the sermons wad come frae, gin the minister had nocht to do but waste his time wi' idle vagrant lasses and run-the-countries!"

I could not help smiling as I answered the old lady, who had hitherto always been kind to me.

"Oh, Babby," I said, smiling, "I do hope that you do not mean me!"

"Dinna 'Babby' me, Mistress Fairlie Glendinnin'," she cried with a toss of her head, "fowk that are sae lang awa' frae hame, an' nae reason gi'en, to inquiren' freen's, may expec' to be caa'ed queer names. Aye, they maun that!"

"Well, Babby," I began,—but got no farther.

"Did I no tell ye no to 'Babby' me," she cried, "Miss Barbara, if ye please—! Aye, an' it may be something else afore lang. For I hae been kenned and reputed a decent weel-doing woman a' my days, that played nae pliskies, but gaed ilk day to the kirk that I

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could, and bode the ither in the kitchen—never missing a lawfu' day—me and my faither's afore me!"

"Well, Miss Barbara," I struck in, as soon as I could get a word, "I am obliged for what you tell me. But I must see Mr. Glendonwyn at once, as I cannot stay—and my business is important."

"Stay," she cried, catching eagerly at the word, "stay—na, it will be a short day and a lang ere ony like ye are asked to 'stay' in a minister's house. Did ye no hear, young woman, that I hae already telled ye in sae many words o' the English language (maybe it is no taught in schules nooadays like mony ither things that were thocht respectable i' my youth—no that I am an auld woman either, certes, no!) that ye canna see the Reverend John Glendonwyn, B.A., minister o' the Free Presbyterian Kirk in Gower pairish this day——"

How long this torrent of scarcely disguised asperities would have continued to flow I cannot tell, but the course of events was changed by the initiative of Little Johnny Colstoun. Quite unseen by me and probably also by my doughty antagonist, he had detached himself from my hand and made off in the direction of the herd's house. After that, he disappeared entirely for some minutes, and his movements from that point can only be made out by inference from circumstantial evidence.

As far as I saw, however, there issued presently several things from the herd's house of Bennangour. *Imprimis*, one wild, sustained, and savage yell indicative of pain, anger, affliction, persecution, the torture of the boot, the inquisition, and all the worst pictures in the third volume of Fox's Book of Martyrs. *Item*, one rapidly moving small boy in stained blue blouse and twinkling knickerbockers, his mouth open and squared with anguish, his face stained with some red unguent, a jam-pot in one hand and the debris of

some pastry in the other. *Item* (still in order) a grey-headed oldish man active on his legs, bare-headed and without a coat, with his shirt sleeves rolled up to his elbow. He had a stout hazel stick in his hand and his intentions were evidently to overtake the small boy—probably for purposes of political argument.

But still no John. I began to think he could not be at home. At sight of me, however, standing at bay, as it were, with Babby giving tongue in front of me, her elbows akimbo and her head continually tossed in the ascendant, the grey-headed old man suddenly dropped his avenging rod, abandoned the chase of Lil' Johnny, and dived back into the house with a ludicrous suggestion of a rabbit disappearing into its hole.

He was out again in a moment, however, and descended the little rough road with a step of curious dignity. He had attired himself in a black swallow-tail coat with brass buttons, and his white tie was square and formidable as Babby's elbows. I think this apparition, appearing without warning from the herd's house of Bennangour came nearer to sending me down the hill than all the baying of Babby's drums of war.

So little, at first sight, do we know our best friends.

XXXVIII

LITTLE JOHNNY TO THE RESCUE

IT chanced that the man came down the path directly behind Babby, who was in the full flow of her oration. He caught the astonished dame by the arm, ordering her in stern tones to be gone to the house, or he would acquaint Mr. John with her outrageous behaviour.

Then something in the tone of the man's voice told me that I had seen him before—indeed more than once. It was Grierson, the old Castle Gower butler, who had brought the message to the trysting place that Rupert Glendonwyn had hurt his foot—the same who on a later occasion had delivered the letter at the schoolhouse on the night of our going to Inch Jonet.

"Wha are ye, Duncan Grierson," cried the indignant Babby, "to inform Maister John again what it seems guid to me to do?"

"Babby, mind *yon?*" retorted Duncan Grierson, with dark and mysterious significance.

And Babby evidently minded. For she stood aside—still, however, muttering under her breath.

"A promise is a promise!" she said, "And I hae Maister John for a witness to the fact."

"Mind, Babby," said Duncan, with an air of legal wisdom, "the promise was a condeotional promise merely. There is to be nae word o't till Maister John is settled."

And he bent down and whispered in her ear. I could not hear what he said. But Babby's reply is,

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however, worthy of recording, in so much as it caused me many conjectures at the time.

"And me to be sic an auld fule as never to think o' looking aneath his pillow when he was sleepin'!" she said.

With a very courteous bow the old butler asked my pardon for keeping me waiting, and then apologised frankly for the mistake made by Babby!

"She is a woman weel stricken in years, mem," he said, "ye'll juist need to excuse Babby!"

"'Deed, an' I'm no near sae stricken in years as your nain sel' Duncan Grier!" cried the indignant lady. "Na—no by a guid half-dizzen o' years! Hear ye that!"

But Duncan waved her away with calm superiority, conducting me up the rugged path with the height of dignified respectfulness.

It was, however, amusing to contrast Duncan's largeness of manner, suited for the halls of kings, with the tiny herd's house of which he was doing the honours—as well as the precision of his manner when speaking to me, with the freedom of reply which he used toward the interruptions with which he had to contend on the way.

"Babby, gang ye into the hoose and get a dish o' tea ready," he cried, "dinna spare the leaves! And abune a', see that the water is boiling afore ye pour it in. Indeed, mem, Mr. John would hae been maist disappointed if he had missed your veesit. (Come oot o' that, ye illset wee blastie!) I beg pardon, Miss, but I am afraid your young gentleman will break his neck if he persists in crawling on the roof!—There, what did I tell ye, ye camsteery 'hyule' o' a redeeculous callant?"

Little Johnny had indeed fallen through the thatched and rotten roof of one of the seldom-used sheds in rear of the farm-steading, and was presently

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rescued, howling lustily, by a single leg which appeared waving among the debris. Duncan held him in the air as he might have done a kicking rabbit and dusted him vigorously. Indeed, I fear that he performed the operation with so heavy a hand, that in more than one sense it might be called a dressing down.

So intent was I on the fate of my ally that I did not notice that John Glendonwyn himself was standing, with a strange expression of wonder on his face, in the doorway of the cot. He was, I saw at once, much paler than he had been—indeed, thinner altogether, but with a determined, masterful, and manly expression such as I had never seen on his face before.

I think the blood must have risen quickly to my face. For I could feel myself turning hot all over. And the next moment I was holding his hand, while he was asking concerning my father, my sister, and the others—doubtless wondering what in the world had brought me to the herd's house of Bennangour.

By this time Duncan Grierson had completed Little Johnny's toilet and set that enterprising infant again on his feet. Johnny was crying, if one may use the expression of such a darling child, most viciously. And the old butler had much difficulty in conducting himself reputably before his young master, owing to the fact that in the midst of his explanations he would suddenly find himself spun round by the frantic lunges of Johnny, who, having set down poor old Duncan as the sole cause of his misfortunes, was now trying furiously to reach his black-stockinged shins with his little iron-shod clogs.

Whereupon I pounced upon Johnny and bade him be a good boy, or I would dispatch him back to his mother that same night.

"Shan't go!" exclaimed the hopeful son of the house of Colstoun. "Not that I minds mother much—

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but I hate school. Yes, I does! New Teatzer is so ugly!"

"Oh, Johnny," I said reproachfully, "but if she is good—what does it matter whether she is pretty or not?"

"Does though!" said Johnny, struggling to be free, "*he* finks so—(here he pointed to John Glendonwyn) doesn't tum to our school now, not since New Teatzer tummed. Mother—she thaid so only last night!"

"Would you like some lumps of sugar, Johnny," said John, hastily, from the doorway, "I am afraid there are no brandy-balls up here. You should have sent me word you were coming."

"Let's—thee—thugar!" said Johnny (Which being interpreted meant that Johnny desired to be introduced to the aforementioned lumps of sugar).

"Come away in!" said John, "I have but one room, but the good people make me both comfortable and happy—that is, as far as I can be—without——"

He stopped—and looked very curiously at me. It was certainly a beautifully neat little room, with no appearance of a bed in it that I could see, except that there was a draped screen in the corner which had evidently served (and probably did so yet upon occasion) as a clothes' horse. Otherwise the books and papers were arranged with immaculate care and precision, such as I would never have credited John with possessing. As a matter of fact he owned afterwards that the neatness of his apartment was wholly owing to Grierson, who since his arrival had effected an enormous reformation.

After he had brought us into his room John Glendonwyn stood before me, scarce knowing what to say—waiting, I think, till I had opened my mission. But I knew better than to attempt anything of the kind without parley.

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"Will you give Johnny his sugar?" I said. "That will keep him quiet till it is done!"

John went out quickly, instantly followed by Lil' Johnny, who flung himself off the seat on which I had just arranged him, and plunged after his host through the door shouting, "Me tummin' to see you get it mineself!"

"Think I will not give you enough?" said John, "Have the loaf!"

"Fanks, I will!" said the literal Johnny, and appeared forthwith in the tiny "ben-the-house" with a scarce-broken white cone of lump sugar under his arm.

"Johnny, dear," I remonstrated, "you will make yourself ill. Give it to me and I will break you off a bit."

"No, s'ant!" said the obedient little man. "Have eated free—oh, ever so much bigger nor that! 'Tis all right, Teatzer dear!"

Then I began to tell John Glendonwyn the message my father had sent me to deliver, and when he heard of the gift of the house and five acres of freehold, he rose from his chair excitedly.

"Oh," he cried, "it is like new life to me even to hear of the possibility of such a thing. But we cannot take the property as a gift. That is not to be thought of—we will give your father any price; we will pay a rent!"

"John," I said, "you ought to know my father by this time. What he does, he will do his own way, if at all. All is completed. There are the title-deeds!"

While John still stood stricken dumb by the wonder of the news, the door was opened without noise and Duncan Grierson entered, carrying a tray of tea with little biscuits and cakes arranged cunningly among water-cress and green leaves.

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"Cream or leemon, madam?" he asked, in a low, confidential voice, adding in a yet lower tone, "I wad advise the leemon, miss, as a' the milk was boiled afore ye cam' up the brael!"

After he had served his master, he went steadily to the door, and then turning, remarked at large, as if imparting a piece of general information to whomsoever it might concern, "There's some nice cream tairts in the kitchen wi' raspberry jam—five have strawberry! *They'll sune* be done!"

Like an arrow from the bow Little Johnny sprang from his perch with the loaf of sugar hugged close under his armpit. He had been endeavouring to break pieces off it with the fire-irons.

"Na, na," added Duncan, disembarassing him of the remains of the cone, "gin Babby were to see ye, wi' that, there wad be nae leevin' wi' her for a month! Whilk is a' verra weel for them that hasna to do it!"

So in this fashion John and I were left alone for the first time since he had helped me to roll up the maps in the old infant department of Kilgour Academy, the day he went to college for the last time. Had he forgotten—?

He had come over to where I was sitting. He was kneeling before me. He had taken my hands.—No, —decidedly he had not forgotten.

And as for me—I could never forget. Girls do not forget such things.

But it was necessary that I should tell him that we were all to go away from the neighbourhood, and take up a new life elsewhere. I could see his face pale and change at the news.

"Why should you go away from me, Fairlie?" he was saying, when his words seemed to pierce the whirl of ideas in my brain, "I have just found you again. Your father's anger against me cannot be very bitter.

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I cannot think that he would visit upon my head the sins of my father and brother. If that were so would he have sent you to me with this message of peace?"

There was something in what he urged.—Indeed I had been thinking of it with a certain gladness all the past night and all that day. But what of Kate and her Babe Rupert? What of my duty to them? That at least was unanswerable.

So I only shook my head sadly enough.

"We must wait, John," I said; "you have waited a long time without knowing—you must be good and wait a little while patiently now that you know—that *which you do know*."

"I think it will be harder than ever now!" he groaned.

I suggested the penny post, as a new invention likely to aid persons in our condition and circumstances, and pulled out my purse with some of the famous black stamps stuck in the flap. In vain I offered him one or two.

It was hard at the best—so it appeared to him. And then I asked him what would Babby say, she who would hardly let me within half a mile of the house—well, it was difficult work to get him to laugh on any terms, and in fact I had a price to pay for each minute of good humour. Which indeed I did cheerfully enough. For the poor fellow had had enough to try him of late, and indeed a little self-sacrifice came not amiss even to me.

I suggested that there was the building of his new church to attend to. But I will not mention the fraction of his thoughts which (he declared) that once all-important subject now occupied. For the which rash words I knew that he would be sorry in the morning.

When I went away, Johnny appeared from the kitchen laden with delicacies, ready but not wholly will-

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ing to accompany me. Indeed he only consented to leave the sugar-cone on the distinct understanding that it was to be sent after him early on the morrow.

And as I went through the door I heard Duncan Grierson say in his two diverse voices: "*At what hour will your honour please to dine? At eight? Thank you, sir.* Ye donnert auld deevil, gin ye dinna gang into the hoose and keep your tongue within your teeth aboot what's nane o' your business, I swear by the Pooers Abune that I'll never mairry ye on this side o' Jordan's swelling flood! Hear ye that, ye cantankerous auld besom!"

And I think that John heard, too. For he hurried me down the little loaning and out upon the vast encompassing heather. The day was cooling fast with the early coming of the night.

"Duncan is a faithful servant," he said, in the earnest, simple way which I liked so much. "We must see to it that his latter end is peace."

I did not answer, but in my heart I judged that it would be, seeing how well he knew how to rule his own house.

XXXIX

FATE RIDES BEFORE

THAT night John and I were treading close upon the heels of fate. Fatality stalked behind us and before, yet we saw him not, nor so much as heard his garments rustle. The cattle drew slowly homeward, pacing single-file to the milking-gate. There, being left to wait, they blamed the sluggard dairy-maid with plaintive many-throated mooings.

I think I never saw anything more sweet and peaceful. Full of the promise of love, it seemed, much more so than earlier in the day. In the glen the corn was ripening. Up on Bennangour Anton McMillan's dogs were circling his herds for the last time that night. From the broad strath of Gower we could hear the clink of harness, as the horses, unbound from hay-wain and red farm-cart went by to the watering-place.

Little Johnny gambolled in front, running races with himself, and then stretching back to tell us who had won.

But in spite of these frequent appearances, boldly, unashamedly, John Glendonwyn held my hand. The day of "Lil' Dzonny's" power was well nigh over. Blackmail or whitemail is only good so long as there is a secret to be kept. Now all the world was free to know ours. And when we reached the dark aisles of the Gower woods, which we must perforce cross, John stopped, and suddenly taking me in his arms, bade me

promise that nothing in the world should ever come between us two—neither father, nor sister, nor brother (though goodness knows the poor boys never tried) nor the whole world. And since I would not promise so many things all at once, he took such sweet methods of compulsion that—in justice to John, I had to put off giving the final promise for quite a while.

But at any rate I did promise at last, and John was so grateful that before we knew, there stood “Lil’ Dzonny” before us, with uplifted finger, imminent as fate.

“What makes ’oo want to kiss ’im yike that?” he demanded, truculently.

“Come here, Johnny, and I’ll kiss you, too!” I cried. For I was so happy that I think I could have kissed Caliban himself, if the monster had frequented the Gower woods that night. Whereas “Lil’ Dzonny,” when clean (a proviso very necessary), is quite a pretty boy. But the young man, being perhaps not a little jealous, would none of me.

“I doan ’ants to be kissed!” he said with great emphasis on the first pronoun personal, which it is to be hoped came home to John Glendonwyn.

But instead he only laughed.

“You don’t know what is good for you, Johnny,” he said, “you’ll change your mind some day!”

“Knows what I ’ants though!” said “Lil’ Dzonny,” calmly. “I yikes thugar, peatthes, toffe, minthe pies, and stawbewwy dzam—kisses *not much!*”

He added the last phrase in a tone and with a curl of the lip which were actual triumphs of contempt.

“Anybody can get kisses—” he went on, “there’s mother—she’s all the time grabbin’ at me for to kiss me. And new teatzer—*ugh*—Lil’ Dzonny ’ud rather get the cane twicet on his hand and five times on his—.”

“Johnny!” I cried, “you must not speak so about your teacher—it is wicked!”

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"Will though!" responded Johnny Colstoun obediently. "An' it's no use tellin' her—why oncet (here he grew very excited) oncet she kissed me afore the whole school. And I cried. But if she had doned it again, I'd have batted her over the head wif mine slate—Ah, nashty!"

And here I regret to say "Lil' Dzonny," whose manners had decidedly not been improving under his new instructress, spat contumeliously upon the ground.

Then returning to the subject in hand, he fixed us once more with his finger.

"Course *you* wants to kiss—you're only a girl," he said, "but 'im—he's dot a mumstash and whishers—what does him want to do it for?"

"Well, it sometimes happens so," said John; "some day you'll find out."

"No, I shan't!" said Johnny, very positively. "me and Dzimmy Ogilvy has sweared, as sure as death, that if a girl kisses us, we hope to die if we doesn't bat her over the head—*hard!*"

"Oh, Johnny," I cried, "won't you let even me kiss you?"

"Yes," said the youth, with the tolerant indifference of one making immense concession, "*I* said when I sweared—'cept you and mother!"

"And did Jimmy Ogilvy not allow himself any exceptions?" I inquired.

Johnny hung his head awhile. Evidently Jimmy Ogilvy's exception had been a shameful one.

"Yes!" he said, "but that's nothing—only Dzimmy's silliness!"

"Well, out with Jimmy's exceptions," cried John, gaily for him.

"Well, Dzimmy—he said 'cept *his* mother—and Titty Kirgan."

"And why Titty Kirgan?" I said, laughing. "Isn't

Titty a girl? The name sounds pretty much as if she were."

Johnny looked up brightly and shrewdly.

"'Oo won't tell Dzimmy if I tell 'oo?" he demanded.

Neither of us would so disgrace the generous confidence reposed in us.

"Cross 'oo hearts—hope 'oo may die and double die," insisted the young clerk of the oaths.

We instantly accepted this complicated dissolution as the penalty for violating our pledges.

"Well," whispered "Dzonny," with the solemnity the occasion required, "Titty's bidder than Dzimmy, 'oo sees—and—she—carries Dzimmy's books to school for him, if he will let her do it—*but only twicet in a day!*"

Johnny meditated upon his comrade's shame for a while. Then he shook his head and said, "Dzimmy is so silly, Dzimmy is—I wouldn't! Not for nuffin!"

"Wouldn't what, Johnny?"

"I wouldn't let no girl kiss me—only for carrying mine books!"

"And what might your terms be, Dzonny, most coy of Adonises?" said John.

"Doan know fat 'oo means," said Johnny, "But if she was a big girl wif a purse, I'd make her div' me chocolates—an' candy—an' fings. Oh, lots! And if she was a little girl, I wouldn't let her kiss me t'all—I'd take all ze candy and fings from her wifout! See?"

"Oh, for shame, Johnny!" I cried, "you wouldn't do that—not to a little girl. Some day you might want that girl to be very, very nice to you, and then she would think 'Oh, that is the nasty boy who took my candy long ago'—and then she just won't! Then what will you do?"

"*Umph!*" said Johnny, indifferent to such far-away contingencies. "I should like some candy now—

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haven't had nuffin' at all since old Duncan divved me that stawbewwy dzam!"

It was obvious that this appalling state of things could not be allowed to continue.

"Well," said John, who would have given away the half of his kingdom that night, "here's half-a-crown—only you must promise not to say anything about—about——"

And here he stopped. It was certainly difficult to put into words.

"About minithster kissin' teatzer! 'Course I won't!"

"But Johnny, you must say—'As sure as death and double death!' Isn't that the regular thing?" pursued John, who had had certain experiences as to the wisdom of bribing the youth without putting him on his oath. Even with, the result was more than doubtful.

"Let's see ze half-a-cwown *first!*" demanded Johnny, the future "Successful Merchant."

The coin was handed over, duly inspected, smelt, and finally the young man of business satisfied himself of its entire genuineness by setting a particularly fine set of teeth into it.

"Oll right!" said Johnny cheerfully, "shan't tell! But I wouldn't do it again, you know. Somebody Grown-Up might see you next time!"

The advice was good, and indeed there was scant opportunity.

We stepped into the road and walked across to the little woodland glade which led to the Flower-Cot.

"Fairlie," said John Glendonwyn, making a sudden break into solemnity, "your father will not let me thank him in person. Do it for me. Tell him what he has done for me and for our poor folks. You can put it better than I. And tell him also that other—that which has brought the greater happiness into my life to-night."

"What, all of it?" I said, and then thinking of

Johnny, I added. "What will you give me not to?"

"Yes, all," said John, with a firmness and magnanimity for which I could not but admire him, even though I knew he did not mean it.

But the next moment I caught the gleam of humour in his eye.

"You had better," he said, "for if you don't, that perjured, mercenary, little beast will do it for you. It will be well to get in ahead of him."

I looked up grieved and reproachful, all in a moment.

"You are not speaking that way of my Little Johnny?"

"I don't know whether he is your Little Johnny or not," he answered, firmly, "but I am certainly referring to a certain Master John Colstoun. And if he is spared to come about our house, Fairlie, he stands a chance of being taught some rudiments of good manners in a way that will surprise him."

And when I looked at John, I saw a glitter in his eye which I had never seen there before, and his lips were set. I liked the little feeling of fear that came over me. It was delicious to feel that he might even do as much for me if I did not behave.

But in the increasing gloom "Lil' Dzonny" gambolled innocently on ahead, clinking his newly-acquired half-crown and throwing stones at the sparrows. Even so,

*"Unconscious of their doom
The little victims play."*

* * * * *

But as we paused to say good-night beside the gate of Boatcroft, the lilac once more in blossom, white and purple as of yore, delicately scent-laden in the gloam-

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ing dews, we heard the far-off galloping of a horse. A man passed us, going rapidly in the direction from which we had come. But as he went he looked back over his shoulder—then suddenly checking his beast, he turned and approached the place where we stood in shadow.

"Is that you, Mr. John?" he said.

"Yes, Greg—what is the matter?"

"You are to come at once to Castle Gower," said the man without touching his hat. "Your father has had a shock and Surgeon Warner says he cannot live many hours!"

That was Fate's touch on the shoulder for us two.

XL

WE RIDE AFTER

I NSTANTLY John bade the man dismount, and with a single pressure of the hand, he left me. I saw him throw his leg into the saddle and ride off furiously in the direction of Castle Gower. I stood a while dazed with the suddenness of the leave-taking. I knew that, if the news proved to be true, the fat would be in the fire indeed.

My father, so I found from Will who met me at the door as I was entering, had departed that afternoon soon after I had set out with Little Johnny Colstoun. His declared intention had been to go to Drumfern in order to arrange for taking us all thither on the way to the new house he had been preparing to receive us.

And as I went in, whom should I see sitting comfortably at the fireside—but Veronica Cæsar. I know that the blood sprang unbidden to my cheeks as she rose up with her usual swift impulsiveness and kissed me. She had been talking to Kate, who was still busied about her black dress. And I could see that Veronica had been helping her, for the skirt had assumed quite a different aspect. In fact it neared completion.

I do not know what I said or Veronica either—except that she seemed to be scolding me for being out so late. And as for me I was all on pins and needles lest Master Johnny's uncertain tongue should reveal certain secrets of the fir woods of Gower. But he did nothing except wipe off Veronica's kiss in a disgusted

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manner with his handkerchief, and begin to play obtrusively with his new half-crown.

"You small reptile," cried Veronica, with distaste, "you are a decent enough boy clean spoilt! That's what's the matter with you. It would be telling you if I had you for a month over at the manse with my scamps. I would take a frill or two out of your tucker, young man!"

"Well, 'oo shan't!" said Johnny tranquilly, "I don't love 'oo—oo's nasty!"

"Frank!" said Vera, laughing. "Sweet child! Speaks so prettily, too—no wonder you pet him, Fair-lie. Well, I know somebody who wouldn't, that's all!"

She regarded him with a look of manifest disapprobation, which spelt "birch-rod" as plain as print. Master Colstoun was wholly unmoved.

"Who gave you that new half-crown, Johnny Colstoun?" she demanded, eyeing it as the owner fitted it alternately into either eye or held it somewhat perilously between his teeth.

"Tisn't 'oor bissness!" responded Johnny with his usual simple directness.

"Johnny mustn't speak that way to a lady," I said, sternly, "or Johnny will be punished."

He turned upon me quickly.

"Does 'oo want Lil' Dzonny to tell the lady *fings*?" he asked, quick as the darting sting of a wasp.

I did not answer. Duty and prudence, discipline and valour's better part never were in more direct conflict. So I said nothing. I chose that better part—discretion.

"You have had a nice walk?" asked Veronica, softly, stitching a broad lace collar on Kate's completed dress. I cannot but think that she had some suspicion or at least some curiosity as to where I had been. Besides, I learned afterwards that in my absence Kate, as was

her custom, had been talking to her about her husband and Babe Rupert.

Yet so clever was Veronica that from her manner you would never have suspected that she knew anything.

"Oh, yes," I answered, "Johnny and I were out on the moor. It was a fine night, and we came back through the wood, stopping once or twice to gather flowers!"

"Stopped free times!" said Johnny, with aggravating accuracy.

"Did you bring any flowers back?" said Kate lifting her head for the first time. "I would like some to take up to Babe Rupert. He likes them. When he is awake he crows and chuckles over pretty flowers just wonderfully. He is growing such a clever child and so dear—but then, ah—how could he be otherwise?"

"Ah, how indeed!" sighed Veronica, with the least trace of ironic intention.

"I will go out and get the flowers," I said, "I will take them up to baby myself. I should like to see him!"

"I will tum and help 'oo *gather* them!" said Johnny.

So hoping to cover the verb which he had used, and fearful of other revelations, I took him with me gladly. I went into the garden and picked what of corn-flowers and bluebells, bell-heather and wild thyme could be found there. Then I went up to Master Rupert and put the flowers into a glass by his bedside.

Veronica stayed a long time after that, but though I was in the sitting-room most of the time, except when I was getting supper ready, the name of John Glendonwyn did not once pass her lips. And Vera is usually so frank.

But all the time a curious sense of something impending weighed on me, so that I got hold of my brother Will, and, after binding him to secrecy I told

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him of the sudden illness of Mr. Glendonwyn, and that I had promised to marry John.

"Does father know?" said Will, looking at me very strangely.

I told him I did not know whether he did or not—adding, however, that John had told him long ago, when he went to Edinburgh indeed, that he loved me and meant to ask me to marry him as soon as he could. Also that my father sent me this afternoon with a message to the herd's house of Bennangour.

"Oh!" said Will, thoughtful, then after a pause he added, "I think he wants to give in, and can't bring his pride to let him!"

Which, as I now judge, was pretty near the truth.

Yet if it were a fact that he had gone away in order to give us a clear field (for the sake of my happiness—because I had been fretting and growing pale), I think my father would have stayed where he was, had he foreseen what things were to happen that night.

I told Will that he had better entice Harry and Dick early into the house and keep them there reading or playing draughts. They could have something nice for supper, I said—anything, indeed, to bribe them to stay.

"Oh," said Will calmly, "I'll entice them—I'll bribe them! I will just tell them that I will hammer the lives out of them if they don't. That will be all right!"

And believing that he knew best, I left him to make his arrangements. But when they were needed, Harry and Dick were certainly in the kitchen. I asked no questions and none of the three volunteered any information as to how their presence had been brought about.

* * * * *

It was, I think, about eight o'clock and still quite

light when Veronica announced that she must go back to the manse. Will and I prepared to convoy her. Little Johnny was also to go home with us, unwilling in body, but consoled by the thought that if we hurried we would get to Miss Emily Parton's before that lady's shop closed for the night.

"Sides," remarked Johnny hopefully, "if I raps hard on ze shutter, Miss Parton will come and peek through, an' when she sees it is Lil' Dzonny, she will open ze door!"

From which it will be inferred that Miss Emily Parton was a lady of business principles and knew a good customer when she saw him. For great is the virtue of short accounts. "Lil' Dzonny" always paid cash. The gentle lady of the toffee shop trusted him not.

"Will," I said, "when I go to the door, you might ask Harry and Dick not to go out till I get back."

"Right!" he said, and went over to them as I showed Veronica out.

"Take care of Babe Rupert till I get back!" I said to Kate, "don't let him stray!"

Kate laughed a quick little scornful laugh—more like her old self, as Veronica stooped and kissed the boy in his cot. I forgot to say that, by this time, we were all three girls upstairs in our room, where Veronica had gone to put on her hat and things. Then she picked up the little glass of blossoms which I had hastily picked in the garden.

"These are pretty *wild* flowers, are they not?" she said, looking across at me. You would not have thought that Veronica could have been so spiteful, would you? But, do you know, I don't think she had properly forgiven me for letting her think it was Rupert I cared for, that day when I had the headache and she was so kind to me. She did afterwards though, so it came all right.

Well, we had come down stairs again, and I was

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standing at the blue palings looking out along the road towards Castle Gower (for I somehow felt that something must happen that night) when the same servant who had spoken to John, came forward quickly from under the lilac tree at the corner. He had apparently been standing there waiting.

He had a letter in his hand and I thought that I saw Veronica draw herself up at the sight of the Castle Gower liveries.

"I think I shall walk on—! Goodnight, Fairlie and Will!" she said, rather shortly. But the coldness of her tone made the tears come into my eyes.

"Don't, Veronica!" I cried, "please don't!—You don't know in what trouble we are. And you are the only friend we have!" (I meant girl friend, of course.)

And while she stood irresolute what to do, I tore the note open and read these words:—

"Castle Gower, Tuesday evening.

"Please come at once with Greg—bring Kate and the baby. What we talked of must be done to-night if at all. We are expecting you here. Carriage will be at corner of road. Bring your father or Will with you if they are at home, but for God's sake do not fail to bring Kate and the child.

"JOHN."

There was no more than that. But how packed with matter for decision was that little flimsy half-sheet. Should I obey my father or—my husband? For I had given John the right to call me that when he liked. My father was not here to consult—and—it might have been a thousand times worse if he had been.

A sudden impulse came to me. I cannot tell what it was that made me do it—perhaps the sight of Veronica's pale, set lips and disappointed face. I was

fond of Veronica and I did not like to see her looking at me like that. Though of course the main part of her trouble, I could not help.

I handed her the letter with a quick gesture of appeal. I could see her waver. Nevertheless she shook her head in refusal.

"Help us, Vera! You have helped many!" I said and laid my hand upon her arm. She took the note and read. Then when she had finished, she read it over again carefully, and then she drew a long, long breath.

"What Kate told me to-night is true then?"—she said, looking very straight at me—"about Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn, I mean?"

"It is true," I answered.

"Then I will go with you," she said slowly, "I may think you are a deceitful little brat, Fairlie Glendinning, but I can't help liking you in spite of it. I hope you will be more straightforward with—with *him*—than you have been with me."

This was no time then to make the long explanations which I made afterwards, and which I set down at length in my former paper, so I only clutched her arm.

"Thank you," I said. "It will be difficult to get Kate to go, but if she will come at all, it will be with us two."

"First, let me write a note home—one of the boys can take it," said Veronica. "I will tell my father that there is great need for me to remain here, and that he is not to expect me home to-night. There will be merry pandemonium at the manse, but never mind. They must just do without me for one night in a good cause. I shall have all the rest of my life in which to make it up to them!"

She went in and while she was writing (characteristically, she wrote very large, half-a-dozen words to a page) I brought Harry out of the kitchen and bade him take Johnny Colstoun to his mother, and at the same

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time deliver Vera's letter at the Manse of Kilgour. He was, of course, all curiosity, but standing wholesomely in fear of Will, asked no questions. Then I showed the letter I had received to Will and bade him get ready to come with us to Castle Gower.

"I will not!" he cried fiercely, "I wonder at you, Fairlie! You heard what my father said about these Glendonwyns."

"Well, you can stay at home then," I said, "it is quite the same to me whether you come or not. I am going to take the responsibility. I have Veronica Cæsar and can go quite well. Only it would look better afterwards if the acting head of the family——"

"The acting head of the family, indeed," he said, scornfully, "I should like to know who that is, if not Miss Fairlie Glendinning!"

"Well, at any rate," I said, "you are the man here—our brother, and people will look to you to protect us! But of course—if you are afraid—there is no more to be said!"

"Oh," he cried, "if you put it that way, I will come. You know very well, Fairlie, that I am not afraid. No, not of all the Glendonwyns in the burying-ground and out of it!"

It was a more difficult and delicate matter to break the matter to Kate. But at last I hit upon a way, and in her then state of mind I found it easier than I had anticipated. Her dress was done at last, thanks to Vera Cæsar—not to me, lazy little pig that I am!" Now Kate had in her a root of love for nice things to put on. I on the other hand cared more for nice things to eat, after the manner of the unclean four-footed beast aforesaid. I told her that she had been sent for to attend a meeting of the family and friends of Rupert, and how it was a great blessing that she had her dress finished in time and the pretty lace collar and cuffs stitched upon it all in readiness.

"But I can't go and leave Babe Rupert," she said, just a little wistfully. "Do you and Vera go. I will stay with him."

"But," cried Veronica, enthusiastically, "we will all go. Babe Rupert, of course, must go too. You see it is a family gathering."

"And I can hold him in my arms all the time,—" she said, anxiously, "and we will come away soon?"

"Yes, quite soon," said Veronica, "that is, whenever you are tired. Fairlie and I will give you a turn sometimes. But you can keep hold of his hand lest we take it into our heads to run off with him. He is so wonderfully lovely that we might, you know!"

At this our poor Kate was very much pleased and sprang up all eager to be dressed. She herself carried Babe Rupert upstairs to have his prettiest clothes put on. And with Veronica's wonderful talent for getting people to do things, and her facility in dressing others, gained by many years' expiatory suffering at the Manse of Kilgour, we soon found ourselves at the door.

"Dick, you just mind the house! Don't go out, and don't answer questions!" I said, as I went through the door.

"Nor ask them,—" growled Will, who saw the unspoken interrogative trembling on his brother's lips, "or I'll knock your head off! You hear?"

"*Umph!*" growled back Dick in a yet lower tone, intended solely for home consumption,— "think you're the great man, Will, don't you?—Mr. Sir William-Wallace-Bruce-Tom-Crip-Duke-o'-Wellington Glendinning!"

"Get in there and stay!" replied Will, truculently.

And Dick returned to the fireside with as much lack of grace as he dared show.

XLI

THE LAST OF MR. SURGEON WARNER

I THOUGHT I possessed some courage and I believe so still. But I own that as we drove through the lodge gates of Gower into the avenue of the Castle, passing miles and miles of green woodlands, seeing about us in the long June twilight far-stretching parks and policies with noble trees standing singly and in clumps, cattle feeding knee-deep in grass or drinking at the still river stretches, with not a fence or a house anywhere—only those noble avenues stretching on and on, I felt myself just a poor little school-teacher who had strayed out of her proper sphere, and would have been glad enough to be back again into the simple world I knew so well—yes, even the Infant Department of Kilgour Academy!

I was glad to have Veronica with me, who on her part sat playing with baby and talking to Kate, perfectly unimpressed by all the beauty and grandeur. I once heard Vera say that she only liked a sunset because it reminded her that it was getting on towards suppertime.

Kate also took everything with Indian-like stolidity. She held up Babe Rupert to the window, calling out to him to look out at the bunny rabbits leaping back into their holes, or "hotching" placidly on all fours over the sward, as they fed further and further out from their sandy warren on the plantation edges.

"See, Baby," she was saying, "all these were your father's, my dear, dear Rupert's. I am so glad that we are going to visit some of those who loved him and who owed so much to his kindness."

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At last at the top of a long ascent the woodlands suddenly ceased, and fell mistily behind us. We drove out of them, sharp as the sun drives out of a cumulous cloud, and lo! darkly massive before us stood up the ancient towers of Castle Gower, with such a red and gloomy sunset flaming behind them, that the sun himself appeared to be dying on an ensanguined bed.

Somehow the sight made me shudder, though I knew not what I had come there to see.

Then came the outer gate, which was open, and a drawbridge like that of a real ancient castle, which indeed it was. The wheels clattered harshly on the cobbled pavement, anon rumbled solemn and hollow as we passed beneath the arch. Then came lights—and lo! at the carriage-door John's hand and above it his dear, much-tried, kindly face.

"My father is no better," he said quickly to the servant Greg, "put in another pair of horses and be ready. You may have to drive to Drumfern to-night with Dr. Warner!"

He helped us out one by one, opening his eyes wide at the sight of Veronica, but making no remark, save that very low in my ear he whispered the words: "Thank God you have brought them!"

He took us into a lofty hall with heads of roe deer, great horns of foreign animals, bison skins and bear skins, most of which Rupert had brought home from his travels. I would have taken Babe Rupert from Kate but she would not permit me.

"He shall be carried into his father's house for the first time by his father's wife!" she said, simply and determinedly. And indeed there was a certain fitness in it after all, which I could not help but acknowledge.

So we passed up a grand staircase on and on. I saw long dim vistas and servants gliding here and there, with downcast heads and silent feet, making no sound on the thick carpets. There was a curiously

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pleasant smell of old rose-leaves and furniture polish everywhere, and then came a lighted room and a tall gaunt angular man whom I had never seen before, rose to greet us.

"This is Mr. McCrosty, my lawyer," said John, "also for many years that of the Glendonwyn family, though my father has recently been ill enough advised to supplant him!"

Then turning to Kate he introduced the old man specially to her. She stood up tall and straight, with a grave simple dignity, something like an ancient statue in her pose, which I marvelled much to see. It was perfectly wonderful how the consciousness of being Rupert Glendonwyn's widow upheld her all through that night. All seemed to come as easy to her as breathing the air in our garden at home among her flowers—the splendour, the furniture, the lofty roofs, and the reverend hush over all. For me, I confess, I was miserable every moment I spent in the place—yes, in spite of a thousand Johns I would never have got over the feeling. I am certain of that. The words ran through my head more than once. "This is no my ain hoose, I ken by the biggin' o't." And I felt that I would go the length of any, except, perhaps a capital crime to keep me from living in such a place—aye, or John either. For I knew he would be happier with me in a cottage, than in a palace with Veronica Cæsar. He had said so only the night before. Not but what I like Veronica very much. And from that time forward, I quite lost my feeling about taking the heirship away from him and giving it to Babe Rupert. Moreover there was no merit in the gift at any rate. For Babe Rupert *was* the heir and nobody could change the rightness of that. Besides which, John Glendonwyn was far more apt all the days of him, to strip himself of all he had for the sake of others, than

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to take one doit or stiver of aught that was another's on any pretext whatever.

While these things were passing in my mind, Mr. McCrosty was beginning to speak. He seated himself on the far side of a kind of table, crossed his legs, and pursed his lips as if he had been going to whistle. I could not think at first what he reminded me of. I remembered afterwards. It was partly of a parrot I once had and partly of a college professor.—Quite a lot of lawyers are like that too. I mean lawyers who do not speak much in courts, but get the papers ready for those who do. I forget what they are called properly—writers we call them in the country.

“Mr. Glendonwyn is very seriously ill,—” he began, with a curious little whistle in his voice at the end of every sentence or so, the effect of which was truly remarkable, contrasting as it did with the real dignity of his manner and the gravity of his communications. I learned afterwards that, in his youth Mr. McCrosty had been a great stammerer and had cured himself by always whistling a bar of “Duncan Grey” or some other Scots ditty as often as he felt himself coming to a standstill. The result was certainly peculiar. For even now he could not help interlarding his most solemn periods with lyric strains more or less appropriate. As thus: “Having been summoned therefore to the bed-side of my ancient friend and patron, and consulted as to what was his best course in these painful circumstances, I took it upon me to remind him that—that—that—

“ ‘Duncan Grey cam’ here to woo,
Ha, ha the wooin’ o’t!’ ”

—That justice was a condition of repentance, and that reparation and honest dealing misbecome no

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man. If he was satisfied that his son Rupert had left lawful issue, the matter should not be allowed to remain hanging in the wind one single moment. Having moreover been informed by Mr. John Glendonwyn (who did me the honour to make me his confidant in the matter some time ago) that the young lady's father had destroyed an important though happily not indispensable document, I advised Mr. John Glendonwyn to apply directly to one of the two witnesses of the marriage still alive and accessible—that is, to Miss Fairlie Glendinning, which he did in the form of—ah—

*“ Will ye gang to the Heelants, Leezy Lindsay,
Will ye gang to the Heelants wi’ me?
Will ye gang to the Heelants wi’ me, Leezy Lindsay,
My bride and my darling to be? ”*

And though the circumstances were certainly rendered somewhat difficult owing to the opposition of the lady's father and by the fact that he had so far sequestered her, that it was only by chance or stratagem that she could be approached, I informed him that I had but little doubt that the young lady, considering everything, would reply—

*“ Oh, whistle and I’ll come to ye, my lad,
Oh, whistle and I’ll come to ye, my lad,
Though faither and mither and a’ should gae
mad,
O whistle an’ I’ll come to ye, my lad! ”*

* * * * *

It is not necessary to continue Mr McCrosty's somewhat long-winded statement, which indeed amounted to little more than that Mr. Gregory Glendonwyn desired to own his son's child publicly as the heir to

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his estates, and that in this act of justice he was being heartily supported by his surviving son, Mr. John, to whose noble heart and generosity Mr. McCrosty speaking (as he said) from a full and particular knowledge of the subject, desired to pay the humble tribute of his respect and admiration.

The lawyer having finished, we were forthwith ushered upstairs into a great dimly lighted room, in which lay Mr. Gregory Glendonwyn, looking very pale and worn, his nostrils so thin as almost to be transparent and his eyes cavernous and dark beneath heavy eyebrows. He was lying at full length on a bed, propped up with pillows. He had about him a loose dressing-gown of some fine wool of a brownish hue, while Dr. Warner, looking like a sallow spectre—thin, erect, and colourless as bleached bone stood a little apart, gazing at his patient with sinister eyes.

Another man of a lawyer-like appearance, indeed the same Mr. Ingalls who had formerly made himself so prominent in the ecclesiastical affairs of the parish, sat at a desk with a second sheaf of papers before him.

Mr. Glendonwyn nodded to us as we came in—opening his eyes indeed at sight of Veronica, but like his son taking no objection to her presence and indeed making no remark upon it.

Mr. McCrosty nodded over to his brother lawyer as much as to intimate, "All set—let us proceed!"

Whereupon Mr. Ingalls rose and said, "It is the wish of Mr. Glendonwyn that the marriage of his late son Rupert Glendonwyn to Catherine or Kate Glendinning should be put beyond possible dispute. I have therefore drawn up a paper embodying a statement of the facts which will be attested by one of the two witnesses, Dr. Harold Warner of Kilgour. This document I will now proceed to read."

This, when he had finished it, proved to be a brief but perfectly exact statement of what had occurred

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in connection with the marriage of my sister, to which was subjoined a medical record of Dr. Warner's several visits to Inch Jonet and of the birth of Babe Rupert. There were also included in the budget several letters from the late Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn to his friend Warner, in which specific and repeated references were made both to the marriage and to the birth of the child.

"This, my friend and I agree in thinking," continued Mr. Ingalls, "would have been sufficient for the purpose which my client has in view—that of putting the legitimacy of his heir-at-law outside the limits of serious dispute. But it would be well to have in addition the signature of the other witness to both marriage and birth—that of Mrs. Rupert Glendonwyn's sister, Miss—Miss Fairlie Glendinning, is I think, the name."

Mr. Ingalls looked across to me, as if he expected that I would speak, but I waited in order that he might invite me to do so. It was, however, John who spoke.

"Tell them what you know, Fairlie!" he said.

And it was pleasant thus to be ordered by him before so many people.

So I told my story as briefly as I could, and when I had finished, Mr. Ingalls said, "Then I am to understand that Miss Glendinning considers Dr. Warner's narrative to be a fair and correct account of the facts?"

"Perfectly so!" I said.

"Then I presume you will have no objection to swear to the facts," he proceeded in an official tone, "My friend Mr. McCrosty is fiscal of the county—perhaps he will put the young lady on her oath before signing."

Which being done, I signed the document in due form.

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"There can be no harm in your friends also putting down their names as witnesses of the signatures of Dr. Warner and Miss Glendinning," continued Mr. Ingalls.

So after Veronica and John had signed, the latter carried the paper to his father, who traced the letters of his name with a trembling hand, but determinedly and painfully, taking quite a long time to get the rubication to his mind.

"You will also witness Mr. Glendonwyn's will—it will be better to have the same names upon that!" interposed Mr. McCrosty.

After these formulas had been carried out, Mr. Glendonwyn signed to Dr. Warner to approach the bed. The surgeon did so in his usual gloomy, saturnine, half-contemptuous manner. If Rupert Glendonwyn at times looked like a beautiful devil contriving mischief, as I have said Harold Warner looked at that moment like an ugly devil who never could have contrived anything else.

"I desire to bear witness," said Mr. Glendonwyn in a feeble but steady voice, "that I consider Dr. Warner ought to bear no blame before men in the matter of my illness or death. The fault, if fault there be, was mine alone. And I desire with my last breath that my relatives and agents shall take no steps against Harold Warner in the event of my death. Being, as I am credibly informed, a dying man, I take leave to say that I freely forgive Harold Warner for all the evils he has brought on me and my house, of which this accident is but the last part—and the least. In token of which I have agreed to shake Dr. Warner's hand for the last time."

He held out his hand and Dr. Warner took it with the old triangular bayonet-thrust look strong in his eyes. The old man held the passive fingers for a moment.

"It is understood," he added, "that this forgive-

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ness and immunity only holds in the event of my death. If by any freak of Providence I am spared, I am free to pursue Dr. Warner and bring him to account in any manner open to gentlemen!"

"That is understood!" said Dr. Warner grimly, and went out to the carriage which, as we already knew, was waiting his convenience in the courtyard.

XLII

KATE'S LAST MESSAGE

THERE was a possessing silence in the room till the door closed and the abyss of soft carpet, wide hall, and outer dark swallowed up the surgeon.

Then we heard the voice of Mr. Glendonwyn again, a little firmer now, but still weak and far-away.

"I would like to see my grandson," he said, "will you bring him forward?"

Kate rose and went swiftly to the old man's side, a beautiful expression on her face.

"See," she said, "this is his son—I have called him Rupert too—Rupert Glendonwyn. But he has really no name yet, for my father would not let him be baptised."

The brow of the old laird darkened ominously.

"I have at least an equal right to bid, or to forbid," he said, "moreover I have not now long to live. I desire that it shall be done forthwith, John!"

The son, so quiet, ready, humble, worth a thousand of that other, was at his father's side in a moment.

"I educated you, and put you into the parish which you have despised and deserted," said his father, "I have no sympathy with you or your work. But that is not what I meant to say. You have not laid aside your ordination vows with your parochial ones. Baptise this child! He has no earthly father. I myself will present him for baptism."

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John looked down at Kate.

"Do you wish it?" he said, softly.

She nodded a bright assent. Indeed I have seldom seen her look so radiant and happy—certainly not since Rupert came that last time to Inch Jonet.

"Of course!" she answered, in that clear sweet voice that was always to me like the singing of a bird, "Rupert's father wishes it—and—I am sure he himself wishes it—where he is!"

Old Gregory Glendonwyn laid his hand on Kate's head as she knelt by his bedside, the youngling grasping and stretching to get upon his feet, which he was just beginning to feel under him. For, like all the Glendonwyns he had been late in walking.

"You loved him?" he said, with a thrill of unexpected tenderness in his voice. It was the child's father the dying man meant, and Kate caught the meaning in a moment.

"I loved him—and I love him!" she said. And the lamplight falling upon her upturned face and on the loosened gold-flecked glory of her hair (like liquor of Danzig, I always said) made her countenance almost like that of an angel worshipping at a shrine.

"*So—did—I!*" said the old man slowly.

Kate laid the babe in his arms, and rising, kissed him on the brow swiftly.

"God have you in his keeping!" she said, using one of my father's phrases when any of us were going on a journey.

"Amen!" said Gregory, softly, "that prayer from you will do my soul no harm, at any rate!"

And at that moment Babe Rupert, clutching at a large gold repeater watch which lay on the bed with the hunting case open, threw it down and broke the glass. Then, seeing what he had done he burst into a howl. The old man patted him indulgently.

"Let him have it," he said. "It has faithfully meas-

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ured sixty years of time for me. It will be of small use to me in eternity!"

Gregory Glendonwyn asked a drink, and Kate, who hardly ever thought of her own food, gave it to him in a moment from a tumbler on the table. He drank and lay back a while with closed eyes. He waited reverently, such an awe has even the ante-chamber of death. Then he motioned to John and he went near.

"I have—something—to say—" he said in a hurried staccato voice. "Lift my pillow—no—not you! Let Rupert's wife do it! She loved him—you hated him—What she has done, of good or ill, was for his sake. If I have sinned, it was for his sake—his sake."

So, unjust to John and hating him to the last, the old Laird would not permit the best son in the world to lay so much as a finger on him in the day of his mortal sickness, and indeed, made no attempt to conceal his distaste at his mere approach. Well, it rejoiced me to think that I could make that up to him—and I would.

Very gently Kate adjusted the pillows. If I had had to do it, living or dying I would—but I am told that I must not say what *I* would have done, and it is true that it does not come into the story. Yet how can one help one's feelings at the sight of injustice—wherever and whenever one sees it?

There never was a son like John, as I, who know him so well, will maintain.

"I have not much to say," Gregory Glendonwyn continued clearly and feebly, "nor yet, as I think, a great while in which to say it. I have arranged that the money belonging to my wife—which was left to my son John, and which I ought never to have used to pay my son Rupert's debts, shall be refunded to him year by year, principal and interest, as the estates will allow of it. My son knows of the forgery and malversation of trust which was committed on

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that occasion, and therefore shares with Mr. Ingalls here and Mr. Fiscal McCrosty the criminality of compounding a felony!"

"That is an ordinary part of every lawyer's duty!" said Mr. McCrosty, checking himself the next moment in the midst of the first line of—

"The laird o' Cockpen' he's prood and he's great——!"

"At all events" continued Mr Glendonwyn, grimly, "I am going where Letters Criminal do not run and in a few hours I shall be safe under the greatest of all Statutes of Limitations. And indeed a greater penalty hath been executed upon me for my sins. I told you and Dr. Warner told you that I had gotten a stroke. It is a true word. Behold it, gentlemen!"

And with a quick movement of the hand, Gregory Glendonwyn threw aside the brown dressing-gown and showed a bandage stained with red, drawn tightly across his left breast.

The same movement revealed under the coverlet two small swords, one of which was stained with blood six inches from the point.

The two lawyers started to their feet and came hurriedly forward. John Glendonwyn cried out a loud sudden word, and leaped to the door. But his father called him back.

"Nay," he said, "do not go. You heard what I promised to Dr. Warner. Bear him faithful witness—and me. What I have said is the truth. But stay—take the babe away. He troubles me!"

Kate snatched her Babe Rupert to her bosom.

"None shall ask me twice to take my child away!" she was beginning indignantly, but Veronica took her gently by the arm and led her out, throwing a

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glance backward at me which said "Stay where you are—I will take care of her!"

Babe Rupert, struggling in his mother's arms, howled lustily for the watch with which he had been playing.

The gold hunting case had been shut, so that he had been obliged to confine himself to thumping the metal cylinder upon the fender, and dragging the massy seals to and fro over the carpet.

"Give it to him," said the old man, indulgently, "he is Rupert's own boy!"

And it was easy to see how it had come about that Rupert Glendonwyn the elder had grown up to be the man he was—which indeed has made us extra careful with Rupert the younger.

As soon as the door was shut, Mr. Glendonwyn took up his tale.

"To be brief, I quarrelled with Dr. Warner about my son Rupert. He had been his companion abroad, and desired to trade upon certain knowledge he possessed, in order to blackmail me. I struck him in the face for something that he said about my son in connection with the tablet which I had put up to his memory. He would have gone away, but being angry I challenged him to fight, giving him his choice of sword or pistol. I compelled him to fight. We fought in this room. And at the second engage he ran me through the lung. It is bleeding inwardly, he says, and I cannot live. The doctor from Kilgour will be here in an hour—Dr. Arbuthnot from Drumfern in the morning. Warner was to send them on as he passed through. He will keep his word, I know, as I have done mine to him."

He lay a good while motionless, breathing slowly and with difficulty. Then he continued.

"But it is all useless. I know it. I can feel it.

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Besides, Warner told me the truth. He had every reason for lying to me. It was his own diagnosis which fixed me in my resolve to get him off. He has the means of escape, and to-morrow, with what I have given him, he will be beyond the reach of pursuit. Now I am weary—so weary—! Let me lie down and rest awhile. And John, when Dr. Chisholm comes and Arbuthnot, do not let them probe the wound or give me pain. Let an old man die in peace. It was done in defence of his dear son's good name!"

His breath seemed to be slowly drowning out.

"Where is my daughter?" he went on with increasing difficulty of utterance "Rupert's wife—I want her! She had a soft hand—a winsome way. But Rupert should not have married—not without telling me. And then he would not have married at all. Nevertheless, send for her!"

Kate came, in her arms Babe Rupert. She stood before the bed, still a little hurt because she had been asked to take the babe away. She did not know that Mr. Glendonwyn had done it to spare her the knowledge of her husband's past.

The old man looked at her strangely. Then he smiled.

"Have you any message?" he said, simply.

She understood instantly. A dark flush overspread her face, rising to her brow.

"Yes," she answered, bursting into a passion of tears, "*tell him that I love him—love him—love him—as when first I put my hand in his!*"

XLIII

LECTURE AND ADDITION

[Being the concluding Observes of the First Editor, which are made by him conformable to the usage of that late excellent Historian Mr. Robert Woodrow of Eastwood, who could never be content to set down anything without telling (as it were) the end of the matter as well as the beginning.]

HAVING thus performed my duty to the best of my inadequate ability, by the inclusion of all such narratives as seemed most pertinent to the case and which told the story most succinctly and clearly, it has been laid upon me to satisfy posterity as briefly as may be concerning the outcome of all these things. Writing as I do, in June of the year 185— I can see the end of many things which were of necessity unseen by those who took part in these affairs. Perhaps too great a part of the book has been taken up with matters purely personal. Also many things capable of being construed mirthfully have been added.

And this was done of intent, and according to the platform which I proposed to myself from the beginning.

These Memoirs, therefore, are not to be set on the shelf of staid and sober histories. Indeed they constitute more the "Analecta" of the various Authors than their "History of the Sufferings." They were intended primarily for the children of both branches of the house of Glendonwyn—that is to say, for the

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son of the late Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn, now a lad of growing form and much personal comeliness, dwelling in the manse of his uncle, the Reverend John Glendonwyn, minister of the Free Presbyterian Church in the parish of Gower—in which house also Mrs. Rupert Glendonwyn, his mother, resides.

The Great House is shut up—that is, so far as any public entertainment is concerned. But I myself had the pleasure of taking tea with Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Grierson in the housekeeper's room the other day, and I am bound to say that a more affectionate husband and a more douce and amenable housewife it has never been my lot to see together. It was a pleasure merely to observe them.

"Na, we never quarrel," said Duncan, with his old shrewd twinkle, "I never let Babby get that length. Na, I juist check her in time! And how do I do that? Easy—byordinar' easy—when ye hae the airt o't. Some haes it, and again some haesna! For me I juist threaten that if Babby doesna behave hersel', I will e'en step ower to the manse—that the folk here aboot name 'Fairlie's Haa'—and resume my service wi' Maister John. That never fails wi' Babby!"

"An excellent prescription," I made answer, "but not, I fear, of universal application!"

"The mair's the peety!" said Duncan, shaking his head sententiously.

As to David Glendinning and his sons—the Old Grey Wolf duly removed himself according to his pledged word, and for long held no intercourse with either of his daughters. But a severe illness, which Fairlie had in the second year of her married life, brought him to see her. Since which time, intercourse has been not only frequent but cordial. The matter of his vow, I suppose, he has reconciled to his conscience, by the fact that the events which brought about the reconciliation of Kate and her husband's

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family took place during his absence—as also the marriage between Fairlie and Mr. John Glendonwyn.

But I think it will be pretty clear to any impartial student of these records, that, if David Glendinning had not intended something of the kind to happen—at least so far as Fairlie and John were concerned—he would not have dispatched Fairlie up Bennangour that June afternoon with the important deed transferring the Boatcroft property to the deacons' court of the Free Presbyterian Kirk, and then—betaken himself out of the way. To say the least of it, the collocation of events is instructive.

Indeed I myself put the question to the ex-joiner in his retreat within the bounds of the pretty village of Lochrutton—where Will has now an excellent business, and where a new Flower-Cot has arisen, after a new love story which does not come into this relation. David Glendinning, being employed in constructing a waterwheel of new design and extraordinary workmanship for Will's two eldest children (twins) had only time to reply as follows:

“‘Forgie!’ What need hae I to forgie? Did my bairns want bite or sup frae me and come to my door seekin’ it—wad they no get it, even to the half o’ my kingdom? I wad wear my last plack on either of them, but I dinna gie where I am no speered! I wad instruct them in the richt way o’ releegion, gin they asked me. But sorrow a yin o’ them wad venture to breathe a syllable! Na, na—I ken the value o’ my guids, and wha wants, maun e’en tak’ the trouble to come seekin’. It’s the same wi’ the forgiveness. No yin o’ them has speered it affme, that I ken o’!

“‘Aye, ye may say it—David Glendinning has been a consistent man a’ his days. Indeed there’s nane in the warld that can claim the like, an’ it werena the Pope o’ Rome himsel’. A’ the rest, ministers and people alike, are tied to somebody else’s coat-tail.

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"Noo, that this is the fact, I wuld juist proceed to prove till ye, in fifteen heids and three particular in ilka yin o' them——!"

But these Forty-five particulars are by a self-denying ordinance spared the reader, though the editor himself withstood them to the bitter end.

As for Veronica, she has never married—being, as she often goes out of her way to prove, a thousand times better employed in making other people's children happy, than in making other people miserable with her own. As she foretold long ago, she is a paragon of "aunties," and as such, so universally in request, that her father (now alas! a widower) declares that he only sees her at breakfast or at baptisms! "Lil Dzonny," now a fine lad of nineteen and going in for his degree at the university is her devoted slave. He proposes for her hand every week when he is at home and writes to her every day from the city. He carries a lock of her hair about with him, and Veronica answers his lucubrations at irregular intervals—always, however signing her letters "Your Loving Mother"—which, to say the least of it, is discouraging to young affection.

Lastly, there is that larger manse that now stands beside the beautiful kirk which has arisen on the old Boatcroft property by the great bend of the Gower Water. Kate is still there, sweet, beautiful, dignified—her mind calm as a mountain tarn. She is happy in her boy—bright, generous, brave, truth-telling, to whom John is like a father, and who himself is an elder brother to the two children of John and Fairlie Glendonwyn.

And when I was last present at the morning oblation there—John read aloud from the great Bible these words amongst others—perhaps the most beautiful and harmonious writ in our English tongue, "Look upon Zion the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation. . . . For there

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the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby."

I had not previously understood the meaning of these stately and solemn phrases, but now, looking out on the shining breadths of the Gower Water, void of sail and unstirred by oar, with the hills of heather and the white spires of Kilgour dreamy in the distance, I seemed to catch a glimpse of that other Zion and of its peace where "the inhabitants shall not say I am sick, and where the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

THE END

REFERENCE

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